

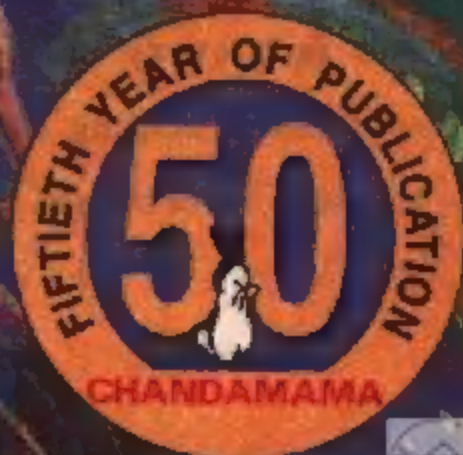
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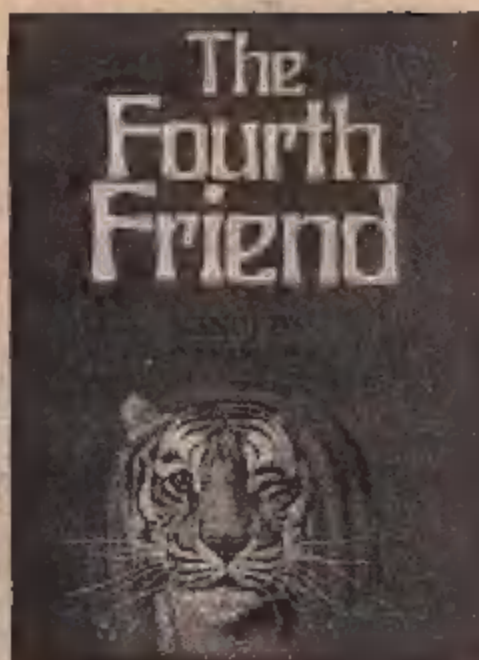
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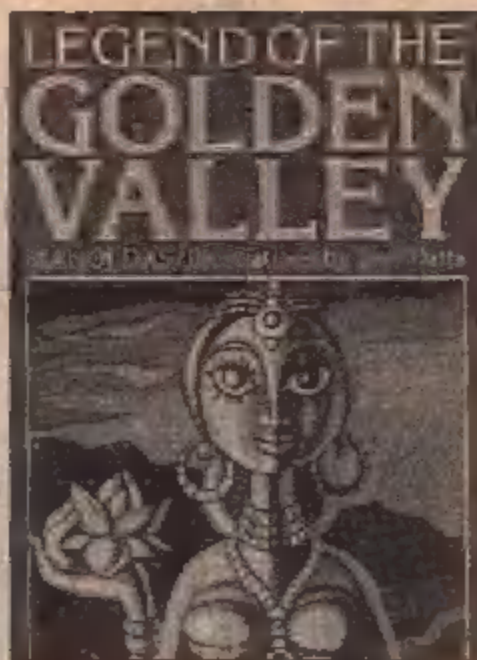
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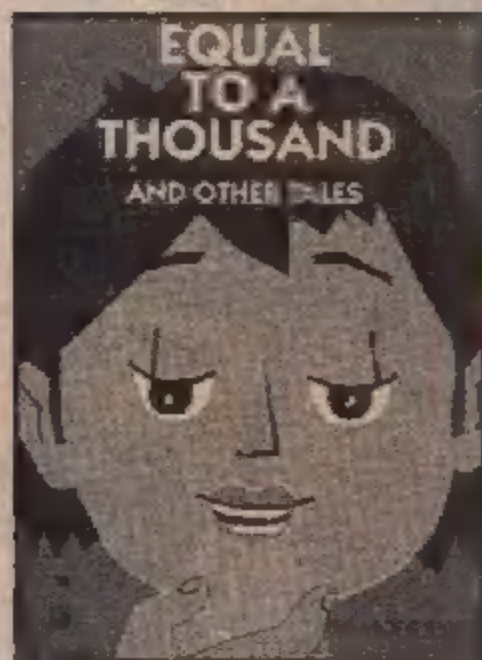
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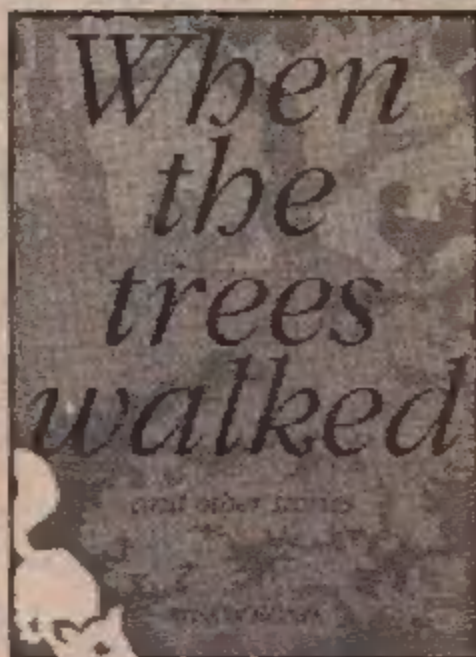
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Vol. 28 AUGUST 1997 No. 2

THE SAGA OF 1857 : The Englishmen came as traders and slowly became the rulers - more powerful than the kings in the land. How could they brook it, after nearly two centuries of oppression and exploitation? One after another they rose in revolt. Among them was a woman—a queen - Laxmibai. When the story starts, she is only seven years old, but learning the martial arts. The royal priest of Jhansi remarks: "She deserves to be a Maharani". A momentous forecast.

THE VIRAGO OF VEERPURI: Veerpuri is agog with all kinds of rumours, as the search for Vajreshwari, daughter of army general Marthandvarma, ends in vain. She has inadvertently landed in Mahendragiri where she comes under the spell of 'Raja', who is not the ruler but has an ambition to become one. He hopes to fulfil his desire with the help of Vajreshwari. She is given a new name, a new figure. What is her role?

MAHABHARATA : Duryodhana turns a deaf ear to the entreaties of his father King Dhritarashtra and other seniors and wise men of the land. Only a war can settle the dispute with the Pandavas. In the Pandava camp, Krishna infuses courage to the five princes. They are Kshatriyas, he tells them, and it is their duty to fight, and not beg or brag. So, fight it will be.

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Founder: CHAKRAPANI

Controlling Editor : NAGI REDDI

The enemy within

There are developed countries; there are also developing countries. India is one of them. We gained our Independence fifty long years ago; yet our country is still 'developing', despite some of the "modern temples" which had made our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru proud during the days of his government.

Have we made any progress since then? Yes. We make fighter planes, missiles, rockets, motor cars, railway engines, the best of silk cloth—to mention only a few. At the same time, 40 per cent of our population suffers from poverty and hunger; more than 50 per cent of our people do not know how to read and write. Millions of our children do not attend schools. Korea, another developing country like India, sets apart 25 per cent of its annual budget for Education. India spends a measly 2.5 per cent, while it earmarks more than 30 per cent of its income for Defence—that is, to keep the country prepared for the eventuality of a war—forgetting that we have to fight an enemy within—illiteracy.

In another month, our country will begin celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Independence. What do the millions of our illiterates understand by 'Independence'? They might have heard the names of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders who brought freedom for us. Do they realise that they are still in bondage, of illiteracy?

This is where we recall Gandhiji's pithy saying : 'Each one, teach one'. We literates need not teach them Shakespeare or the Pythagoras's theorem. We have only to make them capable of reading and writing the very words they utter every day. If we begin now, probably by the turn of the century, at least one-third of the present-day illiterates would have acquired some amount of vocational literacy.

NEW GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE

Last month, this column featured the recent changes in government in England. Winds of change seem to have blown across the English Channel, for, the elections in France on June 1 brought about a change in government in that country, too. If England saw the rout of the Conservative Party and return of the Labour Party to power after 18 years, in France the Conservatives were defeated rather ignominiously, allowing the Left Alliance to capture power after a gap of 13 years. Mr. Lionel Jospin, leader of the Socialist group, took over as the new Prime Minister.

France went to polls one year ahead of schedule. The country has someone belonging to the Conservative Party as President—Mr. Jacques Chirac. The Conservatives were in power, with Mr. Alain Juppe as Prime Minister. Yet, the President and Prime Minister decided to call for early elections hoping their party would return with a larger majority, which would have meant more powers.

But their calculations went wrong. The Conservatives could muster only 253 seats in a house of 577. The Left Alliance secured 274 seats, which did not give them an absolute majority. It was certain that the Alliance would have to seek the support of the Communist Party, which had improved their tally to 38 seats from the 24 they held in the erstwhile parliament. That Party accepted the invitation of Mr. Jospin to join his government. In the 14-member

cabinet, there are two Communists.

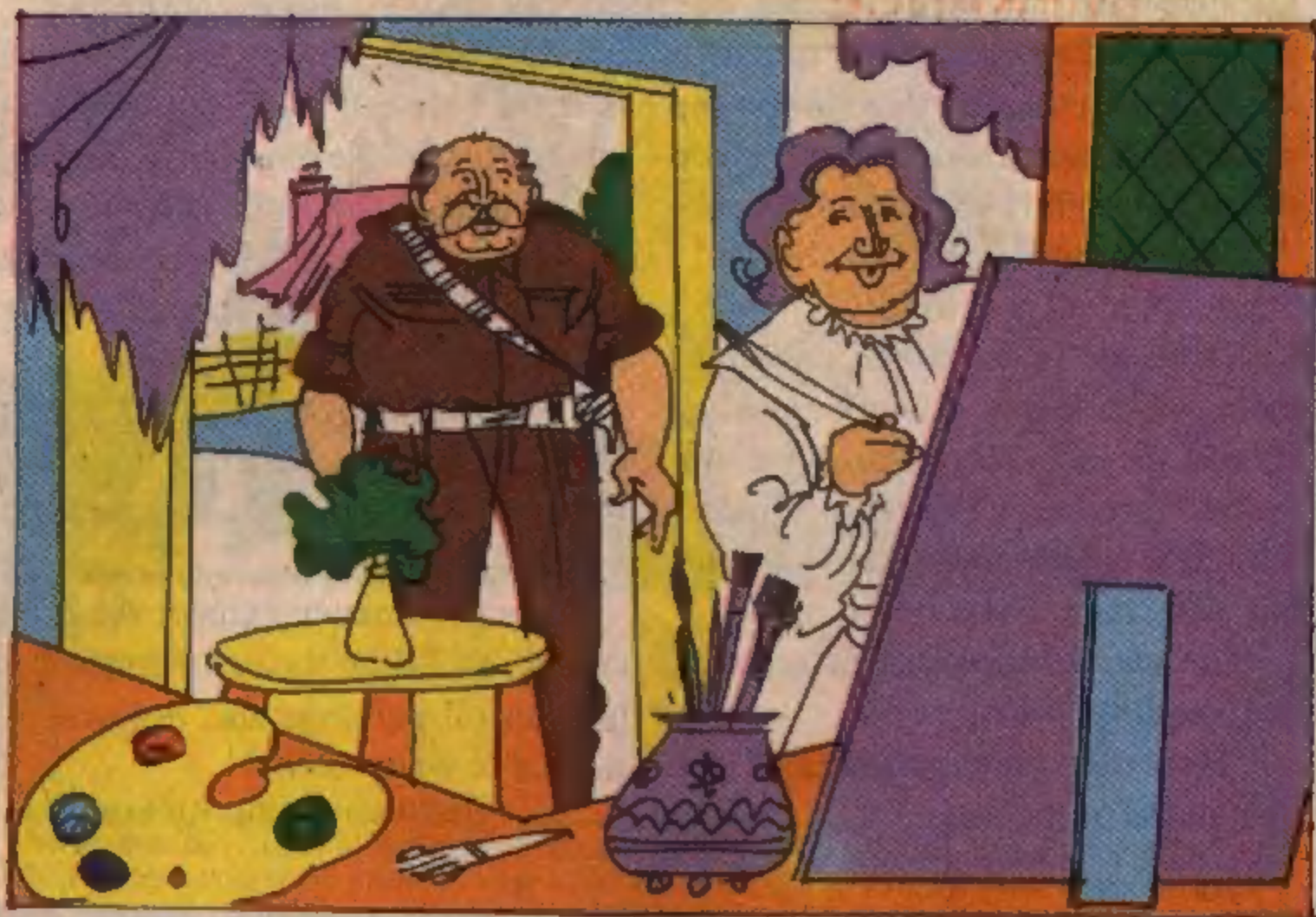
According to the French Constitution, the President enjoys full executive powers. Right now, therefore, the country has a Conservative President, presiding over a cabinet comprising representatives of parties who are rivals to his own party. Prime Minister Jospin has assured that he and President Chirac would work together with "mutual respect, for the good of the country".

The 59-year-old former University lecturer, who was one-time Education Minister of France, Mr. Jospin described the Conservatives' election manifesto as full of empty promises. He wittily said: "The French do not need any more lies. They have to be told the plain truth."

And the plain truth, according to him, is that France suffers from acute unemployment. So, his main task will be to create more jobs. He has also promised many radical reforms. "The people have expectations, but they do not want everything at once. They have made a reasonable demand for real progress in the days to come," he remarked.



An Unchained Lion in a Rainy Night



There was a long, long time ago, in a wee little town. In it lived a stout little man. Though bald, he had a very impressive moustache.

But this is hardly an introduction to his talent. He was an artist adept at painting beasts and birds. His name has spread far and wide.

Once, the zoo-keeper of the neighbouring city came to him and ordered a boarding to be painted with the picture of a lion.

"My good man, should your lion

be chained or unchained?" asked the painter with a soft chuckle.

"Well, does it make any difference? Well, let me think..."

"Let me help your thinking. A picture with a chained lion will cost two hundred silver pieces; without a chain, it will come to a hundred!"

"You'll charge a hundred silver pieces extra for merely painting a chain, eh? In that case, please paint it unchained," hastily answered the zoo-keeper.



The artist agreed to do it and asked the zoo-keeper to collect the painting after a week. The zoo-keeper came on the appointed day, paid the price, one hundred silver pieces, and returned to the city with the hoarding. Soon the hoarding was nicely displayed before the zoo and it did look a beautiful one!

"The lion looks so lively!" commented all and sundry.

Some days passed and one night there was a heavy downpour. What should the zoo-keeper discover the following morning? The colourful and attractive painting was there all right, but, alas, there was no lion in it!

The angry man at once marched to the wee little town.

"How did you paint the lion?" he demanded of the artist.

"Why? Was it not lively?" asked the artist, feigning innocence.

"It was lively, no doubt. But it has disappeared!" said the zoo-keeper.

"My friend, how much difference is there between looking lively and coming to life? He must have escaped, taking advantage of the rains!"

The zoo-keeper kept blinking for a while. "What's to be done now?" he asked.

"Well, it must be chained, that's all! I'll certainly make a new hoarding for you for two hundred silver pieces!" assured the artist.

The zoo-keeper agreed. And, of course, this time the artist made for him an oil-painting and not one in washable water-colour!

—Retold by Anup Kishore Das





THE VIRAGO OF VEERPURI

The story so far: Queen Suryaprabha of Veerpuri gives birth to a baby boy. Almost at the same time daughters are born to the wives of Prime Minister Bodheshwar and army general Marthandvarma. King Soorasen has been warned by the royal astrologer that the birth of female babies in the two families forebode bad days for the kingdom. There is no cause for immediate worry, as the children would take time to grow up. Prince Veersen is kept in the palace and is trained and tutored by the king himself. In the Prime Minister's family Bhanumati grows into a beautiful girl, like her sister Bhanupriya. Marthandvarma's daughter Vajreshwari takes after her brother, Vijaykrishna—brave and daring. One day she goes hunting, and does not return ...

Vijaykrishna and Vajreshwari, son and daughter of army general Marthandvarma, had been hunting in the Banaparthi forest bordering Veerpuri and Senapuri from early morning. As usual, they had set out alone, without taking any escort or guides with them. That day, they did not come across much game, except a couple of deer and a leopard. By

noon, both of them were tired and decided to rest beneath a shaded tree.

Vajreshwari thought she heard a growl. Or was it a roar? She wanted to find out. She looked around and saw that her brother was fast asleep. She did not want to disturb him. She stood up for a moment or two, before she went up to her horse and mounted it a little away from where Vijaykrishna

3. THROUGH THE CAVE, TO A STRANGE LAND



was lying down. She traced her way slowly and with as little noise of the horse's hooves as possible. She was all the while straining her eyes and ears for any sign of a wild animal. She held a spear in her right hand.

No animal came in sight, yet she continued her search. She did not as much realise that she was all alone. But she was not bothered at all, for, the forest was not unfamiliar to her, and she would always find her way back and join her brother before he himself started out looking for her.

Yonder she saw an opening among the rocky boulders. Could it be a cave? she wondered. She was certain that they had never come across that place while they were roaming the

forest on earlier occasions. Should she go back and bring her brother, too? Or should she wait till they attempted ■ exploration together on another day?

Vajreshwari was a courageous young woman. She was not scared of anything or anybody, was she? she asked herself. If she stalked the animal in case it was inside the cave, that would prove to her brother how brave she was. She slowly entered the cave. She took some time to study the inside of the cave, in whatever light was there at that time. It was wide enough for her and her horse to move. And no animal was in sight at the mouth of the cave. She rode cautiously but ready to strike in case any animal jumped at her from either side. When she found that she had to crouch on the horse to avoid hitting her head on the roof, she dismounted and gave a push to the horse, ordering it to go out of the cave. Now she moved forward on foot. The cave was getting darker and darker.

THUD! It was neither loud nor faint, but she did hear it. She stepped backward a few paces and turned round. Now she could no longer see the mouth of the cave. It looked as though something had blocked the opening, shutting out all light except for one or two streaks coming through what looked like pinholes. The cave had been closed with a huge boulder, she surmised. It would be cowardice

to go back and also foolhardy to try and push back the boulder or even shout for help. She was not ready to accept defeat. So she turned round again and groped her way along the wall on one side. It was uneven and the rock had sharp edges here and there. Fortunately, she was walking on level ground.

She did not see the steps in front of her and was about to fall down when she caught hold of a sharp edge on the wall. SWISH! A metallic door fell in position behind her, closing the passage through which she had come. The little streak of light that had guided her till then was now completely gone. It was pitch dark all around. She bent down and felt for the ascending steps. There were three of them. Where would they lead her to? she wondered.

Vajreshwari walked through the cave. It was now like a tunnel. As she groped along the wall, suddenly a human hand gripped hers. "I'll take you, princess!" It was a male voice.

He had called her a princess! Who was he? Was he expecting someone else? A real princess? "Who are you?" she asked in a trembling voice. "Where am I? Where will you take me?" She managed to get her voice steady.

"I shall take you to our Raja," the man said. "He'll tell you where you are."

"But who are you?" asked Vajreshwari again, not quite sure whether she could depend on him to



take her to safety. But she had no other choice, for, behind her the passage had been closed and still beyond, the mouth of the cave, too, was shut. "I can't see you!"

"It doesn't matter, princess," he said, "take hold of my hand and we'll soon be out of the tunnel." He then extended his hand and she caught hold of it in a firm grip. Whatever was to happen, the first hurdle was to come out into the open, she decided. She followed him and he helped her to climb another flight of three or four steps. The man must have pressed somewhere on the wall. Another metallic door opened.

Right in front of her, Vajreshwari saw the huge figure of a goddess. The



place had the appearance of the *sanctum sanctorum* of a temple. Some lamps were burning. In the light from the lamps, she could now see who had escorted her all along the tunnel. His face was not visible because there was ■ tight cloth mask on. He was bare bodied and had only a coloured loin cloth around him.

He took her behind the idol. A turn of the knob on the wall revealed a door that opened into a well-lit courtyard of what looked like a palace. Everything around her glittered. "Tell me, where am I?" Vajreshwari pleaded once again.

"I told you I shall take you to our Raja. He'll tell you everything, princess!" he replied. •

Vajreshwari thought, her entry into the cave was by sheer accident. But here it looked as though she was being expected. But she was no princess! Was there ■ mistaken identity? Anyway there was no point worrying over those details. She must first know where she was and then what they would do with her and whether she would be helped to return to Veerpuri.

★

Back in Veerpuri, when Vijaykrishna woke up, he did not know for how long he had slept. But what baffled him most was, Vajreshwari was not to be seen. Her horse, too, was missing. He was sure, she would not have returned to the capital, alone. It had never happened before. Whenever they had come out for hunting, they were always together and had returned home together. His sister must be somewhere in the forest. She might have gone after some game, he thought. He mounted his horse and looked for her in all the nooks and corners where they had roamed in the morning. No, she was nowhere to be found. Suddenly he noticed Vajreshwari's horse. The animal appeared restless. He called out Vajreshwari's name, hoping that she would hear him and come out. She might have gone for ■ drink of water. He searched for a pond or stream. There was none anywhere near. One thing was certain. She would not have attempted to walk back to the capital

through the forest. Then, where was she?

By then, it was slowly getting dark. Vijaykrishna knew it was futile to continue ■ search for his sister or to wait for her, indefinitely. He decided to go home. He tied the two horses together and re-mounted his horse and returned to the capital. When he did not find Vajreshwari at home, he went to Prime Minister Bodheshwar, as his own father, Marthandvarma, was away. The Prime Minister duly informed King Soorasen who immediately sent a search party to the forest and also recalled the army general to the capital.



Vajreshwari was led through long and wide corridors and large halls by the man in a mask. She watched his movements carefully and did not suspect that he was not taking her straight to his 'Raja' but to someone else. Suddenly she realised that she did not have the spear with her. She must have left it in the tunnel when she was groping for the steps.

The man stood in attention in front of someone who was reclining on ■ divan. "I've brought the princess, sir," he announced to his Master.

"You may go, Bana!" he waved him away, and turned to Vajreshwari and smiled at her. "Welcome to Mahendragiri, princess! Please sit down." He pointed to a seat a little away from him.



Vajreshwari by then had heaved a sigh of great relief. After all, she was in a kingdom and from the look of it, she was safe, too. She took courage in her hands and said, "Am I meeting the Raja of Mahendragiri?"

"I'm not a Raja," the man said, putting on a wider smile. "I should say *not yet*, O princess!" he added, laughing aloud.

"For that matter, I'm also not a princess, sir," said Vajreshwari. "I am..."

The man did not allow her to continue the sentence. "That doesn't matter; we can make you even a queen!" he said, continuing to laugh.

Vajreshwari thought it strange that the man had not till then told her who



he was. "I'm Vajreshwari, daughter of Marthandvarma."

"Who? The army general of Veerpuri?" the man appeared completely surprised. The smile faded away from his face. "What made you come here?"

Was he annoyed with her? Vajreshwari feared. She must proceed cautiously. "I did not come here, sir. I was in Banaparthi forest, hunting, when I saw a cave and entered it out of sheer curiosity. Suddenly, the cave mouth was shut—I don't know how—and I was unable to go out. I then continued to walk inside and came to a tunnel, though I could not see it. It was pitch dark inside. But your man was able to see me and he brought me

here. But, pray, tell me who am I talking to? Will you please send me back to Veerpuri?" If she had any apprehension, she did not show it.

"Yes, we saw you entering the tunnel and we thought you wished to come here," he replied. "that's how you were escorted here. Now that you're here, we would want you to stay here for sometime. We shall inform Veerpuri that you're here and safe. You'll be looked after well."

By now Vajreshwari had had a good look at the man. He was middle-aged; his long hair fell down on his shoulders; he had a trimmed beard, and a pointed moustache. He was wearing a robe taken round all over his body, which revealed a bare neck, except for a talisman, and bare shoulders. She guessed that he was a tall figure. Even now he had cleverly avoided telling her who he was. If he was not the ruler of Mahendragiri, who else could he be? There was no doubt, he was living in a palatial place which could be approached through a cave and a tunnel, to boot! This was quite intriguing. Still stranger was that, he was carefully maintaining an anonymity, though he appeared to be someone holding authority.

In the meanwhile he had clapped twice, and in response to his clap, a man appeared. He too had a mask on, but of a different colour. "Badal, take her to Mohini. She must be given all comforts." He then turned to

Vajreshwari. "As long as you are with us, you'll be treated like a princess. We'll have a longer conversation tomorrow. You've come to Mahendragiri at an appropriate time. You can be of help to us. Forget Veerpuri for the time being. Now, go with him!" He remained seated till Vajreshwari left the room.

She followed the man. They soon reached the women's apartments. "Madam, Master wants you to take care of the princess." He delivered the cryptic message and left the place.

Mohini and the two companions with her, fortunately, did not wear any mask. Vajreshwari thought it prudent not to divulge to the woman that she was not a princess. "I'm Vajreshwari from the kingdom of Veerpuri," she said, hinting that she deserved all the comforts required by a princess.

"We're pleased to have you with us, princess," said Mohini. "You will

not find anything wanting. Malini and Shalini here will be your companions, and whatever you need, you can tell them. They'll take care of you. You've come a long way and you must be tired. You must take rest, before Master sends for you again."

The two girls took Vajreshwari to a richly decorated room, where she soon found out that she would not be left alone, even for a moment. Malini and Shalini took turns to keep her company. What was strange to her was that none of them would tell her who their Master was. She decided to play safe with them, so that she could gain their confidence in course of time.

Later, as she lay on her bed, Vajreshwari racked her brain. Mahendragiri! She had never heard of such a kingdom. She knew of Senapuri. And what could she do for Mahendragiri?

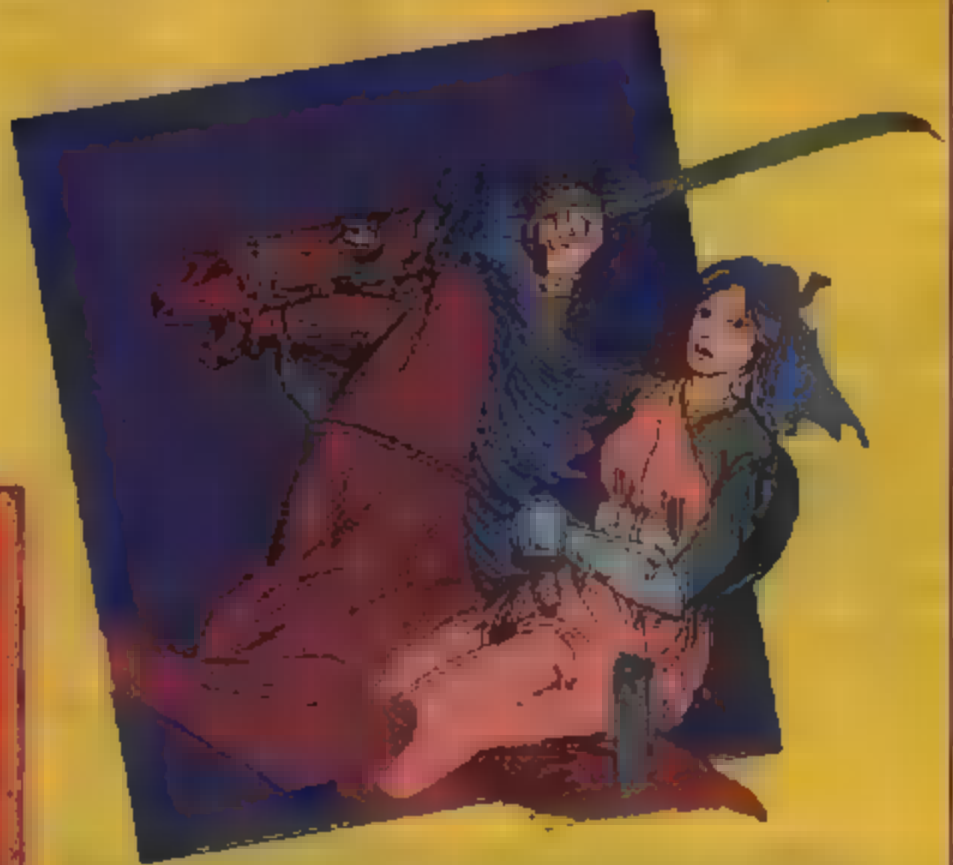
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The Saga of 1857
Beginning in the
August 1997 issue



The story so far: Yudhishtira, after being proclaimed emperor at Indraprastha, the new capital of the Pandavas, allows himself to be trapped in a game of dice, planned by Duryodhana and his wicked uncle, Shakuni. In this crooked game, Yudhishtira loses everything, his kingdom and all his possessions, and is forced with his brothers and Draupadi to retire to the forests as homeless exiles for a period of thirteen years. Eventually the years of banishment come to an end, and Yudhishtira demands that his kingdom be returned to him. The old king, Dhritarashtra, and the virtuous counsellors advise the restoration, but the jealous Duryodhana hates his cousins and preparations are made by both sides for a war.

After his meeting with the Pandavas, Sanjaya returned to Hastinapura. He sought out Dhritarashtra and said, "Yudhishtira has promised that he will not go against what is lawful and just. But he has sufficient grounds to condemn the unjust attitude of the Kauravas. Tomorrow, in the royal court, I will convey his message to all of you."

After Sanjaya's departure, Dhritarashtra invited Vidura the wise to the palace, and when the latter came, acquainted him with Sanjaya's ominous words. Vidura then said, "Oh

King, give at least a few villages to the Pandavas. They are peace-loving. Surely, they will be satisfied with that. We can thereby prevent a war."

Next day, the royal court buzzed with rumours of Sanjaya's dire warnings. Duryodhana arrived with his Generals and allies to hear Sanjaya's words.

Sanjaya greeted the elders, looked around the assembly and spoke thus: "On Dhritarashtra's instructions, I went to the Pandavas, and talked to them. I have now come back with their reply. Arjuna, that great archer,



Then Bhishma stood up and said, "Duryodhana, you have lost your wits to the clever speeches of Karna, Sakuni, and Duhshasana. Stop this war, and your race will continue to live."

As soon as he heard this, the hot-headed Karna sprang up from his seat and replied, "Lord Bhishma, if anyone else other than you had uttered such words, the consequences would have been fatal. Neither have I strayed from the path of Kshatriya virtues nor have I advised Duryodhana wrongly. If war breaks out, I shall destroy the Pandavas single-handed. Why should we offer peace to those who have always treated us as their foes?"

warned that Duryodhana and his kinsmen would be punished severely for their wrong doing. He said Yudhishtira was a patient man, but Bhima would certainly destroy the entire Kaurava army with his formidable mace. Moreover, they had the support of redoubtable warriors like King Virata, the ruler of Panchala, the Upapandavas, Abhimanyu, Nakula and Sahadeva. In the event of a war, they would help the Pandavas with such dedication that not a bit of territory would remain for Duryodhana. Dhritarashtra's descendants would mingle with the dust. Alas, 'this is what Arjuna said.' Sanjaya stopped speaking to let his words sink into the minds of the Kauravas.

Hearing these words, a smile of pity flickered across the old warrior's lips. Then Bhishma turned to Dhritarashtra and said, "Do not place your trust in this vain egotist. He boasts that he will destroy the Pandavas all by himself! But he has yet to prove his valour and has accomplished not even a fraction of their achievements. He speaks out of rancour and jealousy. Therefore, there is nothing surprising in his words. Where was his valour when Arjuna routed the Kauravas so successfully in that ill-fated expedition to the land of Virata? When the Gandharvas overpowered Duryodhana and made him a prisoner, where was Karna? Sleeping? The Pandavas came to his rescue and freed Duryodhana from

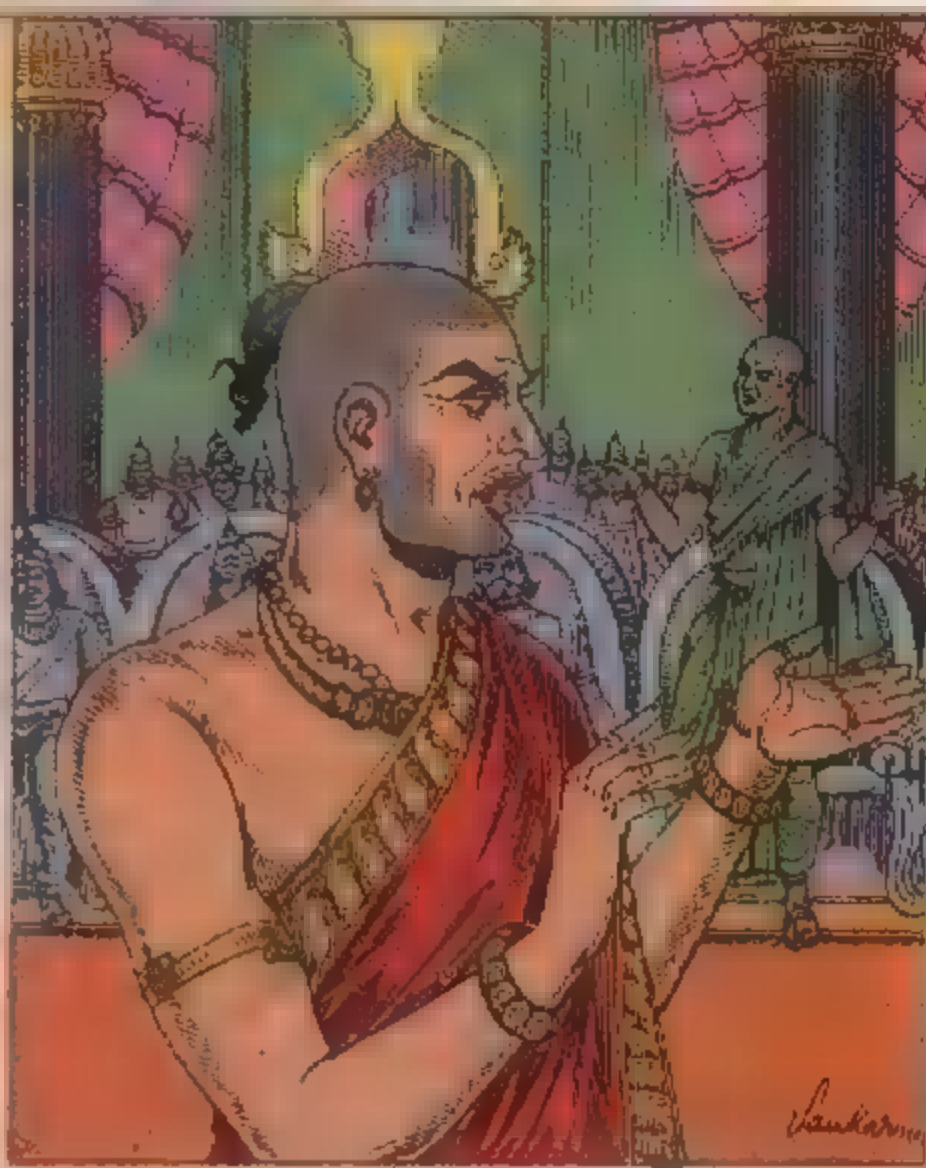
the Gandharvas. Karna is none but a loud-mouthed prater. We should not pay any heed to his words."

Even Drona spoke in support of Bhishma. "What Bhishma has said is true. We cannot quarrel with Arjuna for his hostile words. Let us make peace with the Pandavas. That will be good for all."

Dhritarashtra was perplexed to the extreme by these persuasive words of wisdom and commonsense. But he kept his counsel. Then, after a while, he requested Sanjaya to convey to the court Yudhishtira's message. Accordingly Sanjaya informed the assembly that Yudhishtira did not want war, but if it was inevitable, he was well-prepared for that.

Dhritarashtra was alarmed to hear this. Though he feared neither Yudhishtira nor Arjuna, the thought of Bhima sent uncontrollable shivers down his spine. Everyone was aware of the great strength of that Pandava giant. Even Drona and Bhishma feared him. But they would fight on the side of the Kauravas though they were not inimical towards the Pandavas. But despite all this, deep in his heart he knew that his line would be completely destroyed in the event of a war. So he composed himself and said: "True, Arjuna and Bhima may well destroy us. Therefore, let us think of peace. Bhishma and Drona mean well. Let us follow their advice."

His eyes red with rage,



Duryodhana got up and addressed the king. "Father," he thundered, "why should you think of defeat? If the Pandavas are all that powerful, why should they beg for a few villages? And as for Bhima, well, he is no match for me! I can finish him off with my mace. Lord Bhishma alone can defeat the entire Pandava army. Surely, Drona and Aswathama can kill Arjuna easily! As long as Karna retains the powerful weapon given to him by the divine Indra, no one can defeat him. We have many great warriors to fight with us. Why should there be any talk of defeat?"

Then, turning to Sanjaya, he asked, "How well are the Pandavas prepared? What are their plans?"



Sanjaya gave him a detailed account of the strength of the Pandava armies. When Dhritarashtra realised that the Pandavas were gathering in a formidable array, his heart shrank and turning to Duryodhana, he said, "Duryodhana, have you heard? Your cousins are quite well prepared. Let there be no war! If you seek peace instead of war, people will speak highly of you. Surely, you can live content with half my territory! Give the other half to the Pandavas and end all quarrel. Do not be blind to your fate."

But Duryodhana, brushing aside these words, said: "I know how to crush the Pandavas. I don't need anyone's help. Karna and Duhshasana

are enough for my purpose. We three will root out the Pandavas. There can be no talk of peace between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Never. Not a blade of grass will I give to them!"

Karna, approving these words, exclaimed pompously, "Right! Duryodhana is absolutely right. We can win the war easily. I alone can defeat the Pandavas. I need no one's help in this."

At these vain words, Bhishma remarked coolly, "Karna, don't be a fool. You don't realise what you are saying. Everyone here knows about the powers of Arjuna and Lord Krishna. Your words only betray your low mentality."

Bhishma's contempt stung Karna to the quick and he thought that the former had slighted him. So, he flared up and uttered angrily: "Very well, if both Krishna and Arjuna are that powerful, go and fight them yourself. As long as you lead the Kaurava army, I shall have no part in it. When you cease to be the General of the army, only then shall I display my valour." Karna then walked out of the court furiously.

Bhishma smiled contemptuously and said: "There you are, Duryodhana! Even to fight the enemies, he dictates terms to us. We have not yet drawn up our battle plans, but Karna has already backed out of the proposed war. How can he hope to win against the

Pandavas all by himself? There are so many great warriors in this court and yet he boasts he is the greatest! Such words can only do harm to our cause. After all, what can we expect from the man who tried to pass himself off for a Brahmin before sage Parasurama?"

But Duryodhana replied haughtily: "What is wrong in Karna's words? The Pandavas are no different from us. I need no one's help in fighting against them. I can take them on single-handed."

Then, Vidura the wise spoke. "Duryodhana, don't be hasty. Let me tell you the tale of the hunter who caught two birds in his net. Undaunted, they flew up with his net and the hunter ran after them. Seeing this strange spectacle of the hunter running on the ground after the two flying birds, a hermit stopped him and said: 'O Hunter, of what use is it for you to run on the ground if you want to catch

those flying birds?'

The hunter replied, 'O Holy Sir, as long as the two birds fly amicably, I have no hope of catching them. But should they quarrel, they'll come down and I can easily capture them. I think, their mutual cooperation will be shortlived.'

"So it happened. The birds came down and were caught by the hunter. Therefore, be warned. When two brothers quarrel, someone else will reap the benefit. So the Pandavas and the Kauravas should not fight. I am reminded of the story of those who ran to get the honey from a honeycomb found in a perilous valley and perished in the attempt. If for the sake of some territories you will fight against the Pandavas, do you realise what will happen then? Not a single life will be spared. In that holocaust, everyone will perish."

- To continue

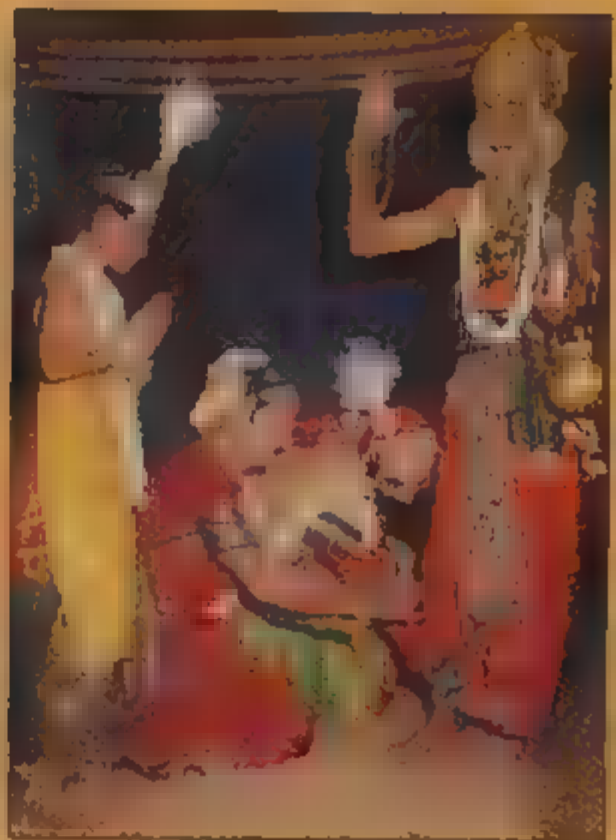


THE BHAGAVATA MELA

The annual Bhagavata Mela held in the village of Melattur in Tamilnadu honours Lord Narasimha, the lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Melattur is 18 kilometres from Thanjavur. Witnessing the Narasimha Jayanti festival can be a journey into another world. For, a major attraction of this festival is a theatre performance. For ■ insight into the Bhagavata Mela, we have to go back five centuries. The Telugu Nayaka rulers considered it their duty to promote and preserve culture. Thus, the entire village of Melattur was gifted away

to 500 Telugu Brahmin families for the preservation of the Bhagavata Mela. The venue of the theatre performance is an open street facing the Varadaraja Temple. Adorned idols are placed at the temple entrance. During the course of the play, the actors can thus look at the gods and goddesses and address them directly.

The themes of the plays are drawn mostly from myths and legends. For many years, the performers have always been men from the village itself. The music conductor and his orchestra stand right behind the actors. The Bhagavata Mela is indeed ■ unique spectacle of drama and music.



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—Shital

BRAHMADATTA

The young king of Panchala, Brahmadatta, was kind and compassionate, and his good deeds endeared him to all his people. He possessed a strange quality. He could understand the language of all creatures, big and small.

One day, the king and the queen were enjoying a stroll in the royal garden. It was a calm twilight after the sunset.

Suddenly the king laughed, his eyes fixed under ■ bush.

Curious, the queen too looked under the bush. But there was nothing funny anywhere around which could have made the king laugh.

"Why did you laugh, my lord?" asked the queen.

"For nothing in particular," answered the king.

That did not satisfy the queen. "The atmosphere is calm and serene. I can't understand what provoked you to laugh," she said, gravely.

King Brahmadatta was not in the habit of telling a lie. He had to say that he could understand the language of all creatures, even if their voice was extremely low. Under the bush two ants were quarrelling on such a small issue that he could not control his mirth.

If earlier the queen suspected that the king was hiding the fact, now she suspected that he was joking with her.

"What you say can be believed only by a fool!" she commented.

The king assured her in all seriousness that what he said was true. The queen believed him, but asked next, "How

did you acquire that virtue?"

Indeed, how? The king himself did not know it. He was determined to find an explanation for his own unusual quality. He prayed to the Lord and meditated ■ Him for long. Next day, while he was walking along a road before his palace, an old Brahmin looked at him and recited ■ verse, recounting the king's past lives.

He was once the son of a sage. To appease his hunger during a drought, he killed his guru's pet animal and ate its flesh. The sin made him suffer in lives thereafter, but again he became a hermit. It was then that he saw a king and was fascinated by his pomp and show. Hence he had been born as a prince. But because of his spiritual attainments in his previous life when he could feel ■ with all in his spirit, he was endowed with the power to understand the speech of all creatures.

Kind Brahmadatta fainted ■ he remembered the history of his earlier lives. After he recovered, he lived the life of a very pious king.

The legend shows that our virtues, qualities, and powers are often the result of our achievements in our earlier lives.



ICEBERG

—Shital



Iceberg is the block of ice floating in the sea, often of immense size. It is formed when a piece of ice breaks off the edge of a polar ice cap or a glacier and floats away. The largest icebergs are found in the southern parts of the world. Blocks of ice as much as 60 miles long, 20 miles wide, and 350 ft. high have been known to break off the edge of the Antarctic

ice cap. Such large icebergs are often used as temporary meteorological stations or even temporary airplane landing strips for scientific expeditions. Icebergs in the northern parts of the world are generally much smaller. Most northern icebergs originate from Greenland and drift southward into the North Atlantic.

RAINBOW

Helpful Language

—Shital



A 15 year old student, Louis Braille changed the life of all blind people. He invented a language called "Braille". By this, blind people could learn how to read and write. A blind person can read braille by running his fingertips along lines made up of groups of raised dots. Braille writing is formed with a Braille writer, a six key machine similar to a typewriter.



New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire

Fortune Comes With a Boon

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikram did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King, normally you should be enjoying ■ good sleep at this hour of the night. Instead of doing that, what makes you go through this strange ritual? Are you trying to acquire some mysterious powers? If that is your aim, then, there are other methods, easier too. You could even think of *tapas*. Haven't you heard of *munis* possessing unusual powers after doing *tapas*? But, mind you, one should not use such powers for personal benefits. If one does so, then those powers will not be effective. I have ■ fine example of someone who



acquired powers, but used them for earning ■ name and fame and coming to grief. Listen to me carefully." The vampire then began his narration.

Dinakar and Sudhakar were brothers. The elder, Dinakar, had taken to business. It was quite successful and he made good earnings. He wanted his brother to join him in his business. "You become my partner, and we shall do business together," he told Sudhakar one day.

But he was not quite willing to do business. "Bhai saheb, I wish to learn a trade," he told Dinakar. "For that, I must travel to other countries. But where's the money for undertaking wide travels? Now could I suggest something? Let's divide our father's

property, and give me my share. And I shall utilise that for my travels."

Dinakar did not object to his brother's suggestion. He called some prominent people of the place and in their presence he divided the property left to them by their father and gave one half to Sudhakar. He sold his share, and with the money he got, he left home on his travels. He went to all sorts of places and spent all the money he had with him on entertainment and for a comfortable life. He did not put any part of the money to good use, so much so, one fine morning, he found that he had just enough to take him back home. Shamefacedly he told his brother, "Bhai saheb, I've just managed to come back. All my money was stolen by someone."

"There was no need for you to have undergone all such setbacks," said Dinakar. "You could have very well joined me in business. Then you wouldn't have suffered all this loss. Just imagine! You must have a sense of responsibility, Sudhakar. You must be aware of your duties and obligations. There is a short-cut for all this. You must get married. I've already fixed ■ suitable girl for you—our friend Prabhakar's daughter. You marry Kanchana. I'm sure she would bring ■ lot of ornaments. She would also get you a sizeable dowry. With all that you can start a business of your own. After marriage, the husband

and wife have to share joy and sorrow in equal measure. So, there's nothing wrong in making use of the dowry she brings home."

Just as his brother had advised, Sudhakar married Kanchana, set up a home, and started a business. Years passed, and they had three children. Dinakar had only one son. When the boy was hardly ten, his mother passed away. Dinakar lost all interest in business, even in life. He sent for his brother. "Bhaiyya, I don't think I'll continue in business any longer. I've made enough money and acquired much wealth. I don't need any more of it. I'm entrusting all my property to you. Also my son, Dinakar. You must look after him. You can make use of my wealth for looking after my business and my son."

He assigned all his property to Sudhakar and headed for the Himalayas. Kanchana was very clever and careful. She saw to it that her husband did not spend all that his brother had given him unnecessarily.

Days passed. Suddenly, both Sudhakar and his wife began to ponder. After all, Dinakar's wealth must one day go to his son, Divakar. If they did not hand him the property when he attains maturity, then, the elders of the place would find fault with them. They might question Sudhakar and Kanchana. How could they escape such an eventuality? They racked their brain. At last they found



a way to retain all the wealth with them.

Sudhakar began working out his strategy. "What's the use of going to school and studying?" he told Divakar. "Look at me! I became a good-for-nothing fellow all because I studied and studied. And then it was your father who advised me to take up business. I heeded his advice, and see who I am today. Even your father, he didn't study much, but became a prosperous businessman. So, stop studying."

Poor boy! Divakar was in a dilemma. He loved going to school and studying. But he had to listen to his uncle's advice. He stopped studying. Sudhakar was happy. "That's



it, my boy, I'm glad you've accepted my advice. After all, you're intelligent to understand that I mean no harm to you. You were entrusted to me by your father before he went away, and it's my duty to give you proper advice. Don't listen to others."

Divakar now remained at home and engaged himself in certain household chores. He would dust the place and tend the garden, and look after the cattle. Their friends were sad to see the change that came over the young boy. They took pity on him. Whenever they asked Sudhakar about his nephew, he would tell them, "What to do? He has no interest in studies! If he continues like this, who knows he wouldn't become another *sanyasi* like

his father! His fate! Who can change it?" And Sudhakar would heave a heavy sigh.

Whenever Divakar heard such conversation, he would feel how blessed he was. He was certain that his uncle would not be able to change his fate.

Then years went by. Meanwhile, Dinakar, who had spent his time in meditation and carrying on conversation with *munis*, *yogis* and *sanyasis*, had acquired much peace of mind and some mysterious powers, too. Suddenly, he had a desire to look up his son. So, he started for home.

One day, a *sanyasi* stood in front of Sudhakar's residence. Sudhakar did not recognise him. He was wearing a mendicant's dress; his forehead was smeared with the holy ash; he had a flowing beard; his falling hair was knotted all over. Sudhakar did not recognise his own brother, Dinakar. Anyway, he showed great reverence to the *sanyasi* and asked him to come inside. He called Divakar and asked him to look after him.

Divakar fetched water so that the *sanyasi* could wash his feet and face. Then he went and brought for him a cup of milk. The *sanyasi* did not take much time in finding out what would have happened during his absence. He realised what place his son enjoyed in that house. He felt sorry for his son. "My boy, you're actually the master of this house, yet you're treated like a

servant!"

Divakar filled out his chest and stood erect. "I'm a blessed person, O revered one! It's all my luck! My fortune!" he said, smiling all the while.

"My boy, you're a fool!" remarked Dinakar. "Your uncle is cheating you!"

Divakar's face fell. He ran inside and told Sudhakar, "Uncle, did you hear what that sanyasi is saying? That you're a cheat! I can't bear such things. I'm not going to him again."

Sudhakar came out along with Divakar. "I took you to be a simple, harmless sanyasi," he told him at his face. "But you've proved to be otherwise. You, too, are finding fault with me. You're telling my boy that I'm cheating him. You're not a sanyasi! This boy Divakar has the highest regard for me."

The sanyasi was very angry with him. "Hey! I'm a real sanyasi! You need not have any doubt," he remarked. "You've misunderstood me. I shall remove all doubts in you. I'm going to grant a boon. But I shall give it to this boy here. When I give him that boon, you'll realise that I'm a true sanyasi."

He then turned to Divakar. "My boy, I shall give you a boon which will not harm others. Tell me, what boon do you wish for?"

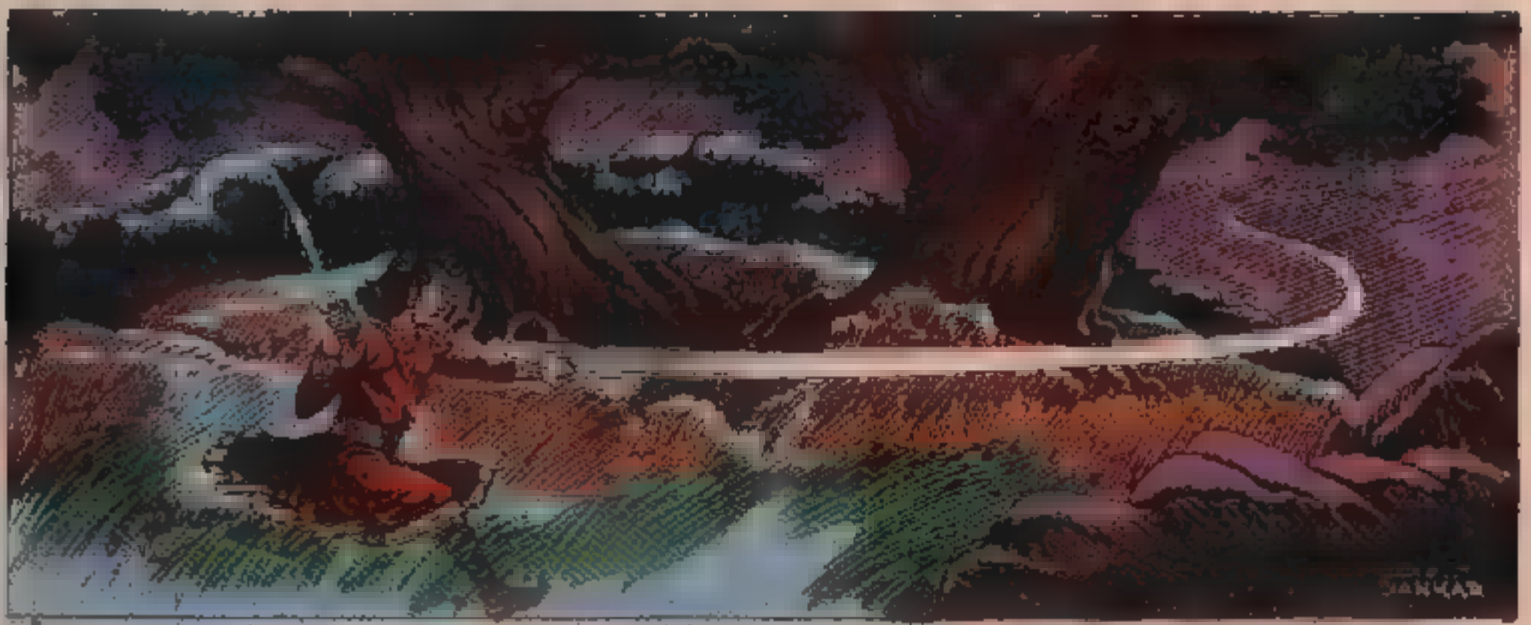
Divakar was now in a dilemma. He looked at his uncle, then at the sanyasi. He again looked at Sudhakar, who nodded his permission. "O revered



one! I'm really fortunate, because I have my uncle to take care of me. So, I don't need any special boon," said Divakar.

Sudhakar was overjoyed when he heard this. He laughed aloud. "See that," he told the sanyasi, "my brother's son seems to have forgotten his father and likes his uncle more. I hope you're now convinced, swami?" He told Divakar: "When a sanyasi offers to grant you boon, it's not proper to refuse it. *You* may not need a boon, but you should accept it at least for my sake. That's only fair."

Now that Divakar received his uncle's assent, he told the sanyasi, "All right, O *guru*! I shall accept this boon—let my fortune go to my uncle,



and his fortune come to me."

The sanyasi was very happy. He blessed the youth. "So be it!"

The boon took effect immediately. Divakar became the Master, and Sudhakar his servant. On seeing this change, the sanyasi left the place without revealing his identity.

The vampire concluded his narration there and asked King Vikramaditya: "O King! Just one question. Dinakar the sanyasi granted a boon to his son for the sake of his own personal happiness and satisfaction, didn't he? Mind you, if you don't give me a satisfactory answer, your head will be blown to ■ thousand pieces!"

The king, however, had ■ ready answer "Divakar was his brother's son, yet Sudhakar treated him like

his servant. Divakar had inherited his father's qualities and business acumen. Still, Sudhakar managed to make him feel that he was good for nothing. Divakar considered himself really unfortunate, but he took comfort in his status as a servant in the house of his uncle. He wanted a similar fate to come to his uncle. It was a harmless desire. Sudhakar was a cheat. The boon was really meant to save Divakar from a cheat. Dinakar himself did not wish to gain any advantage from the boon he granted."

The vampire realised that the king had once again been too smart for him. He flew back to the ancient tree, carrying the corpse with him. Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the vampire.

- Few love to hear the sins they love to act.
- It is easier to give counsel than to endure sufferings manfully.
- To condemn what you ■ ignorant of is the height of rashness.

Coastal Journeys 22

Along The Orissa Coast

Script: Meera Nair ♦ Artist: KS Gopakumar

A slight deviation of a few kilometres inland, takes us to the tiny village of **Bomokoi**, famous for its saris. Textile weaving is a traditional handicraft of Orissa and all over the state one can see people engaged in this cottage industry. When you buy a Bomokai sari you know you have something unique because no two Bomokai saris are alike.

Further north along the coast lies the country's biggest inland lake, the **Chilka lake**. A narrow inlet joins the lake to the Bay of Bengal. The lake spreads over an area of 1,100 sq. km. The water in the lake is brackish during the dry months of the year. But in the monsoons, the rivers Daya and Bhargavi flowing into the lake, drive out the salty water and fill the lake with fresh water. This is when Chilka becomes the country's largest freshwater lake.

The lake is dotted with tiny emerald green islands. On one small island is located the temple of Kalijai, the presiding deity of the lake. The islands are rich in aquatic fauna. In winter, colonies of ducks, cranes, pelicans and gray herons can be seen wading in the lake.

The fishing boats in Chilka have rectangular sails made of woven mat.

The Chilka Lake



Our next port of call is **Puri** which was called **Paloura** in ancient times. Paloura was ■ famous port that carried on a flourishing maritime trade with the islands of Indonesia.

Today Paloura or Puri is ■ seaside resort with the longest beach in the state. It is one of the four holiest places in India for Hindus (the other three are Badri-Kedamath, Rameswaram and Dwaraka).

The majestic temple of Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe, stands on an elevated platform ■ the heart of Puri. It was built in the 12th century A.D. by King Chodaganga to commemorate the shifting of his capital from south to central Orissa. Lord Jagannath is worshipped here as Lord Krishna along with his sister, Subhadra and elder brother, Balabhadra. The idols are made of wood and have ■ unfinished look.

According to ■ legend, King Indradyumna coveted the sapphire idol of Lord Vishnu that was in Puri. He decided to get it, but when he went there he found that the statue had disappeared. Ashamed of what he had come to do, he began to practise severe penance.

A voice from the heavens told him that he would find the lord's idol in the form of ■ log. Soon such ■ log appeared floating on the sea. The king had it brought ashore. He then asked his carpenters to shape the log into the image of the lord. But not a single carpenter could do so. Either their chisels broke or their hands got hurt.

Then one day, the lord appeared before the king as an old carpenter and offered to chisel an image in 21 days, provided nobody watched him at work. The king

Rath Yatra



promised, but driven by curiosity, he peeped into the room before the stipulated period was over. All that the king ■■■ in the room were three pieces of unfinished statues. The old carpenter was never seen again.

The statues are replaced with new ones every 12 years.

The wood, for making the idols, is cut only from the trunks of those neem trees seen by certain *daitas* or worshippers in their dreams. A certain article (which many scholars claim to be the sacred tooth of the Buddha) is taken out from the old idol and placed in the new one by a blind-folded priest, whose hands are wrapped in cloth so that he cannot examine the contours of the object. This takes place at the *Nau Kalebara* festival just before the *Rath Yatra*, the most famous festival of the temple, which is celebrated every year in July.

The *Ratha Yatra* or the Chariot Festival commemorates the journey of Lord Krishna from Gokul to Mathura. The three idols are taken out in three enormous, wooden chariots to *Gundicha Bari* or the Garden House of Jagannath. Nandighosa, the 16-wheeled chariot of Jagannath, is the largest of the chariots. It is 14m high and 11m wide.

Although the journey is just a mile away, it takes the procession an entire day to reach Gundicha Bari. Thousands of people come to watch the spectacular event and even participate in pulling the chariot. There is a frenzy to touch the idol of Jagannath for it is believed that a single touch of the statue on this particular day can free one from the cycle of births and deaths.

The images of the gods are brought back to the main temple after 8 days in a similar ceremonious manner.



The **Odissi** or **Orissi** dance, the classical dance of the state, traces its origin to the rituals observed in this temple. Dancers, wearing saris that are made to flow gracefully in a fanlike form from the waist to the feet, silver ■ white jewellery and white papier-mache flowers in their hair, pay tribute to the three idols of this temple before they begin their performance. Odissi songs are devotional. The lilting *ashtapadas* from Jayadeva's *Gīt Govind*, that celebrates the love of Radha and Krishna, is the favourite.

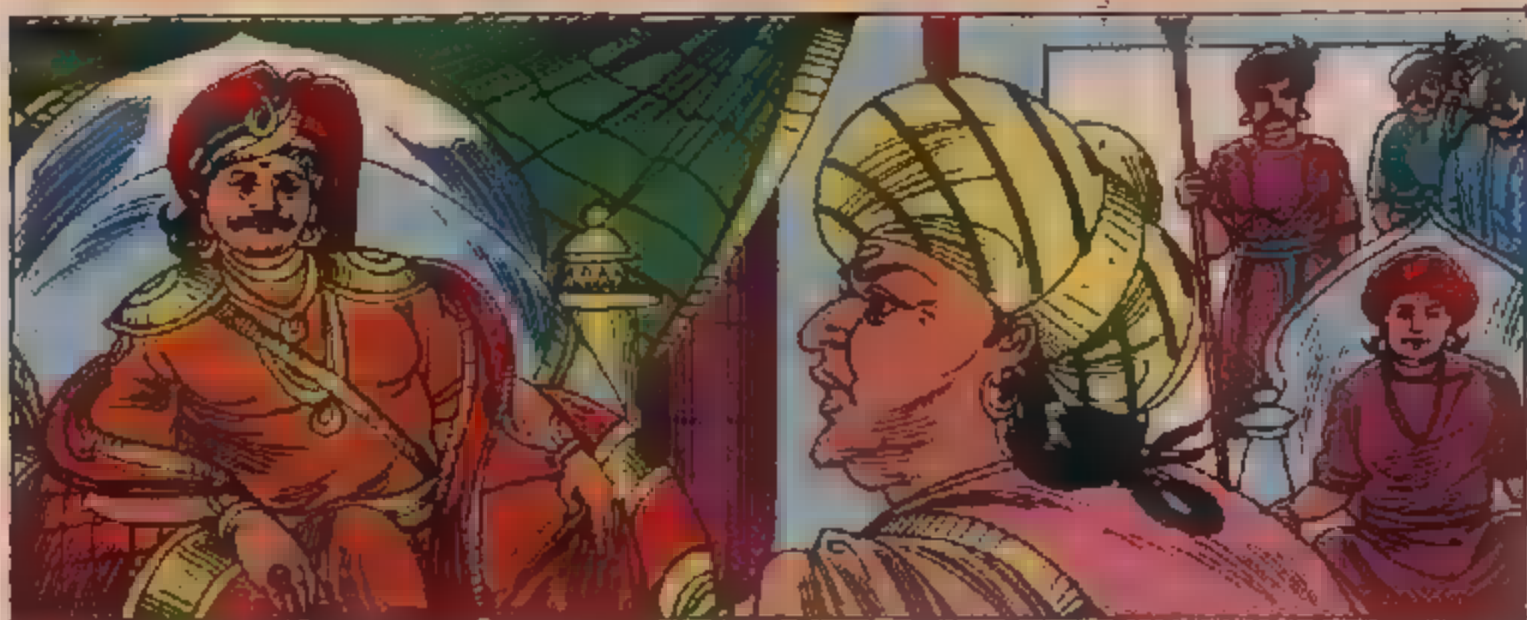
Barely 16km from Puri is **Raghurajpur**, a village of artisans where traditional painters paint *patachitras*, 'paintings on cloth'.

Another 10 kilometres away is a charming Krishna temple. It has a life-size statue of Krishna ■ ■ child. Legend has it that Krishna visited this place as a child to give evidence in a dispute between two Brahmins. Hence the temple was named Sakshi Gopal (*Sakshi* means witness).

An Odissi dancer



"The Cycle of Life"



Swarnagupta, the ruler of Suvarnagiri, was a lover of literature. Poets, writers, and literateurs, naturally, had a special place in his court. He showed great respect for them and often gave them awards and rewards.

Anandsharma was the poet laureate of Suvarnagiri. Most of his works were in praise of the king and eulogised his rule. He was well rewarded for his works. Of late, he had not written anything, and the king was concerned about it. One day, he asked the poet laureate in the court : "You haven't composed anything for a long time! What happened to you? I feel out of sorts when I don't listen to your recitals for months or weeks. I feel something missing. You must fill that void. The new year is fast approaching. I wish you presented a

new work at the court on new year day. I want some enjoyment. Please don't disappoint me!"

"I accept your command, your majesty," said Anandsharma humbly, "But poetry does not flow like the river. The koel sings during spring; the peacock waits for the rainclouds to form in the sky to begin a dance; the lotus opens up only at the sight of the sun. Similarly, a poet's imagination blossoms only when the surroundings inspire him."

There was an up-and-coming young poet in the court. Balbharati. He now stood up and faced King Swarnagupta. "What the poet laureate says is not entirely true, your majesty," he said. "If a poet really wants to, he can write a poem anytime and on any subject. That it needs



a congenial atmosphere and first-hand experience, or that it has to await inspiration is all nonsense. That's like hoodwinking one's mind. If one has the urge, one can write a poem, unmindful of one's surroundings."

Anandsharma did not like the youngster's remarks. Some courtiers who were jealous of the poet laureate cheered the young poet. Anandsharma went red in his face. He stood up. "Balbharati! You're a novice. You can only write romantic poems which easily titillate the younger generation and earn for you their compliments. But such poems are easily forgotten. You are not yet capable of writing epics that will last forever. You require to acquire a lot of worldly

knowledge to write such poems. Don't be under the impression that you need only brains to write poetry. Poetry has to come deep from the heart. Such poetry alone will last long."

Balbharati laughed aloud. "Sir, do you mean to say that one can write even if one doesn't have brains?"

That evoked a loud laughter in the court. Anandsharma did not mind the young poet's retorts much. What upset him most was the derisive laughter that arose in the court. He became grave. "Bala, you should know what you're talking! It's unmannerly. All right, would you be able to compose a poem in time for the new year?"

"Why not?" responded Balbharati. "I shall compose a poem."

"Then, you write one," said Anandsharma. "On new year day, you can present it in the court."

Swarnagupta was watching the confrontation between Anandsharma and Balbharati. "Why this controversy?" he asked the poet laureate. "Why should there be any rivalry between the two of you? Let's have it this way. You both compose a poem each for the new year. We'll decide which is the better of the two, and its composer will be called a 'Kavi samrat'! What do you say?"

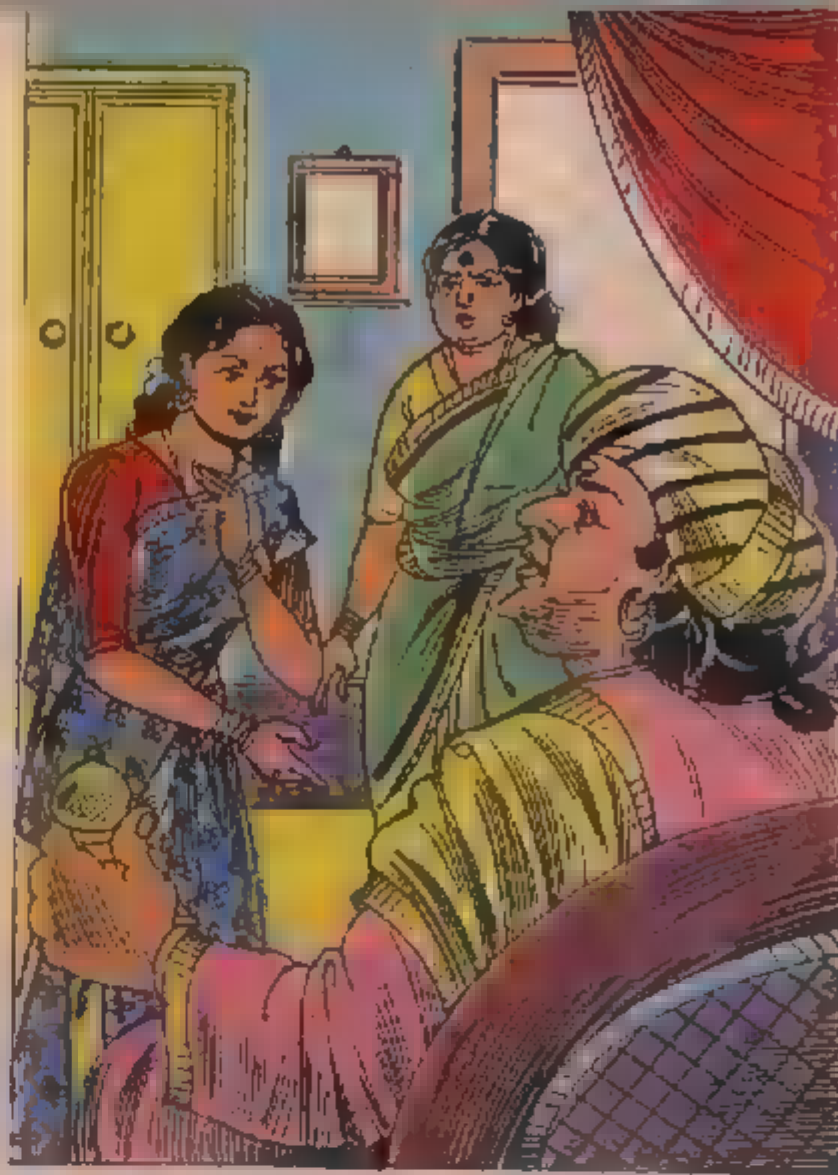
Both Anandsharma and Balbharati nodded their head. The poet laureate continued to be agitated. He was always in a contemplative mood and he stopped talking to ev-

everybody at home. He lost his taste for food and ate very little and that, too, only when his wife coaxed him to. "What has happened to you, my lord?" asked Dharmamba one day. "You're always moody and gloomy. Did you have any trouble in the court? You're also not talking to me. Tell me, what has happened?"

Their daughter, Jagadamba, happened to listen to their conversation. "Mother! What're you implying? Can King Swarnagupta ever say anything against father? Would he dare do that? In fact, whatever father says in court is accepted in toto and without any reservation. His works are appreciated by everybody. Nobody can find fault with him or his writings."

"That was the state of affairs till yesterday, my dear daughter," said Anandsharma. "Things have changed from today. Balbharati—a youngster—has thrown a challenge at me!" He then narrated all that had happened in the court.

Balbharati? Jagadamba's eyes widened with surprise. Whenever she had accompanied her father to the court, she had seen the young poet. He had also noticed her and the two used to exchange glances. He was quite handsome, and Jagadamba had taken him to be well-behaved. And he had now become her father's rival? Was he the cause of her father's agony? "Father, he seems to have said something without any forethought. He'll



soon come to repent!" she said, trying to console him.

Anandsharma began writing. He gave a title to his poem—'*The Cycle of Life*'. He compared human life and its vicissitudes, and the trials and tribulations through which man passed through in normal life, with what is happening in nature. He burnt midnight oil and completed an epic. It was ready for being recited on new year day.

The day dawned. Dharmamba and Jagadamba accompanied Anandsharma to the court. Balbharati, too, reached the court in the company of some young poets. Before he took his place, he looked up and saw Jagadamba. They smiled at each other.



Soon, King Swarnagupta entered the court. The courtiers stood up to greet him. He signalled them to take their respective seats.

"Today we begin a new year," the king addressed the court. "The day will be made unique by two poems written specially for the occasion. They will be presented to us by the young poet Balbharati and the poet laureate Anandsharma. Let's now listen to their compositions."

First Anandsharma stood up and cleared his throat before he started reciting the poem. He sang the poem bringing out its lyrical excellence. He announced the title "*The Cycle of Life*". The king, the courtiers and all others listened to his recitation with

great interest. When he stopped, there was cheering from all nooks and corners of the court.

Next Balbharati rose in his seat. He took out from his shoulder-bag a bunch of palm leaves. He approached the king and handed him the bunch. The king turned the leaves one by one, not once but a number of times. They were blank! There was nothing written on them. He was perplexed. "Balabharati! What's this? Is this your poem? But I can't read anything, there's nothing written on these leaves!"

Balbharati remained silent. He was all the while only smiling. The king looked at him, and then again at the palmyrah leaves. A little later, he smiled and nodded his head. "I now understand! You provoked Anandsharma to write an epic, didn't you? And you want to take the credit? Ha! Ha!"

The Minister, who was sitting near King Swarnagupta, did not catch the point. "Your majesty! We can't understand what you're saying! Did you say that Balbharati has prompted Anandsharma to write an epic? How can that be, when he has not written anything himself?"

"Oh, Mantri! You won't easily understand these things," said the king. "Balbharati has enough knowledge and is capable of writing good poetry. At the same time, he also knows that he can't come up to the

level of the poet laureate. However, he is keen that Anandsharma rose in his status as the poet laureate. He wanted to provoke him, nay prompt him, to strive for and achieve a higher status. He could not find any other method than challenging him openly in the court. As a result, we have got from him a work of high order. Didn't the court enjoy his epic? Balbharati knows that he is no match to the poet laureate. That's why he decided to present blank leaves!"

Anandsharma did not know what to say. He rose from his seat, went up to Balbharati and embraced him with affection and regard. "Bala, I had misunderstood you! And I'm sorry for that."

"Sir, we want to listen to more and more of your works," said Balbharati. "Not only today but in the years to come. That's what prompted me to offer a challenge. Please forgive me." He then touched the feet of Anand-

sharma to take his blessings.

King Swarnagupta showered gold coins on the poet laureate, and called him a Kavi samrat—a king among poets.

Meanwhile, the king had noticed Balbharati exchanging glances with Anandsharma's daughter. "I wish to make another announcement on this auspicious day," said the king. "I guess Balbharati likes Anandsharma's daughter. We wish to bring them together in holy wedlock—provided Anandsharma has no objection and his daughter also reveals her mind."

Anandsharma saw Jagdamba coyly turning her head. He found his wife Dharmamba smiling. He turned to King Swarnagupta and said, "Your majesty, I've no objection!"

The wedding of Balbharati and Jagadamba was performed in the august presence of King Swarnagupta.



A "spoonful" of affluence!

★ *What is the origin of the expression "to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth"? asks Kusum Agarwal of Midnapore.*

A Christian tradition came into practice some 500 or 600 years ago, when a newborn would be taken to the church for its baptism, or initiation as a member of the Christian faith. The baby was given a drop of holy water from a spoon. The spoon made of gold or silver used to have the portrait of one of the apostles engraved on the handle. If the babe was from royalty, separate spoons representing all the 12 apostles were used; and the little one was fed from each one of the "Apostle Spoons". According to the status of the family, either gold or silver spoons were used, the gold spoons being used exclusively for royalty and the silver ones reserved for families of affluence. A baby hailing from a commoner family used to be baptised from a single spoon made of other metal. So, to be born with a silver spoon in the mouth indicated the affluence the baby's family enjoyed.

■ *Reader Jyothirranjan Biswal, of Durgapur, was solving a crossword, in which the clue related to a Trojan youth. He could not guess the word and found the answer "Ganymede" the next morning in his newspaper. He wishes to know the meaning of the word.*

Ganymede or Ganymedes, in Greek mythology, is the name of a beautiful youth from Troy. His beauty attracted the attention of Zeus, King of Gods, who sent an eagle to bring him to the heaven where he was made a cup-bearer for gods. He thus attained immortality. Ganymede is also the name of the largest of the moons around Jupiter.

★ *A.S. Raman, of Secunderabad, often comes across the abbreviation SOS in newspapers. He wants to know its amplification.*

The expansion is 'Save Our Souls'. In olden days, when a ship at sea met with an accident, it would send out a distress signal, using the Morse Code (three dots, three dashes, three dots). Other ships sailing nearby would receive the message and rush to save the people on board. In common usage, the three letters mean a request for urgent help. Would reader Raman like to know how similar messages are sent from aeroplanes? The pilot shouts "Mayday!" into his radiotelephone. The word comes from the French 'maidez', which means "help me". Modern ships, equipped with such telephones and not using the International Code, also make use of this distress call.



CHANDAMAMA

1. ...a pillar without a foundation?

The pillar has been placed on a platform without being joined to it in any way! It was built by the Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana 900 years ago and is also known as the 'gravity pillar'.



16 Where in the World Would You Find...



2. ...the highest railway line in the world?

As the train climbs up to 4816 m above sea-level in the Andes mountains some passengers need oxygen because of falling air pressure. There are nurses on hand to provide medical aid if necessary.



3. ...an underground town built entirely of rock salt?

Situated in the heart of a salt mine, 300 m below ground, this unique town is the result of decades of labour by miners, who have created a church, a railway station and even a ballroom — all carved out of salt!

ANIMAL QUIZ

WHO AM I?

1. I am a bird with short legs. I can't fly but I am an excellent swimmer.
2. I resemble man in many ways. But I walk on my knuckles.
3. I am the largest animal that ever lived.
4. I am a flightless bird. Often my countrymen are called by my name.



5. I am the largest among birds.
6. I have a hump and I am called the ship of the desert.
7. They call me the wild dog of Australia.

TRIP TRAP

The Slip-up

Gaurav has come to know that a boy in the college hostel has a large sum of money in his room. He hires a cycle from a shop in front of his house and pedals to the hostel. He parks the cycle in the cycle stand and goes up the stairs to the boy's room. The door is locked but he has no trouble in breaking the lock. He takes the money, rushes down the stairs and hurries to the cycle stand. Soon he is pedalling down the main road. He is thrilled by his success. He is whistling a merry tune when

suddenly he becomes aware that he has made a dreadful mistake. He goes back to the hostel but he is too late. The boys have returned from the football match they had gone to and the theft has been discovered. He turns the cycle round and rides away. He dare not return home because he knows the police will soon be there.

What is the clue he has left behind?



Mind Benders

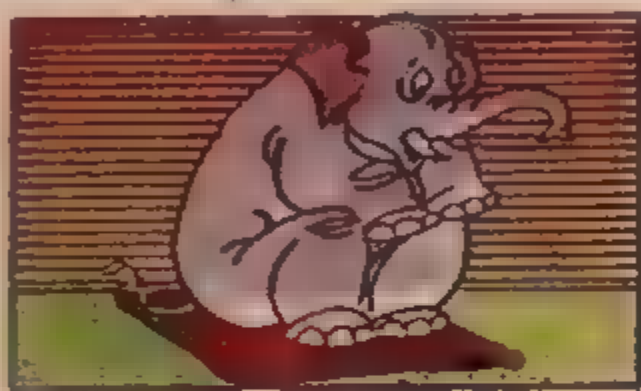
Watch out!

Tricky questions below!

1. Why can't ■ honey locust hop or fly?
2. An Australian aborigine can throw a boomerang so that it comes back to him. One can do the trick with an ordinary tennis ball. How?
4. My friend took a piece of paper and ■ pencil and told me, "I can write with my left ear." I challenged him to do it and he did it. How?
5. What would you do ■ an elephant sits on your handkerchief?



3. There's something wrong in this picture. What?



6. What is a calf after it is one year old?
7. What is the one thing everybody is doing at the same time?

ACTIVITY

The Spotted Matchbox Doggy

Things required:

Two empty matchboxes, three wooden icecream sticks, plain white paper to cover the matchboxes, a penknife, black felt pen and glue.

Method:

1. Cover the matchboxes with the plain paper. Colour the icecream sticks black.
2. Slide one icecream stick through the bottom of one matchbox and the top of the second matchbox.
3. Cut the second icecream stick

into half. Insert the halves into the box to form a tail and ■ front paw. Cut the third stick into half and glue on to either side of the 'head' for floppy ears.

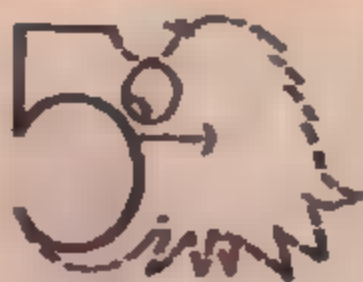
4. Draw ■ eye, a smiling mouth, and spots on the face and body of your doggy.



Let's draw it



Here's how
you can turn
number 5...



...into an angry bird!

And the number 6



...into a cry baby!

Answers to Golden Hours No.15

WHERE IN THE WORLD

1. Guatemala, South America
2. Jatinga, Assam
3. Istanbul, Turkey

PICTURE QUIZ

1. Octopus
2. Shark
3. Starfish
4. Dolphin
5. Sea turtle
6. Jellyfish

TRIP TRAP

If the glass had been broken from the outside the glass pieces would have fallen into the house. The glass pieces have fallen into the garden indicating that the window has been broken from the inside. As the caretaker was the only person in the house at the time of the robbery it is clear that he is the thief.

MIND BENDERS

1. Put one cube into cup A, two cubes into cup B and three in cup C. Then place cup C in cup B. Now each cup has an odd number of cubes!
2. Your mother!
3. Coal!
4. One! Because once you put one monkey in the cage, the cage is no longer empty!
5. Because they can't walk!
6. A clock that has stopped!

INTELLIGENCE



Sultan Mahmud one day went for a stroll in the company of his friend Husain.

Husain was very intelligent. He had acquired a wide knowledge. He took care to observe all that came to his sight whenever he went out.

He and the Sultan crossed the borders of the town and reached the suburbs. They saw a man walking ahead of them.

The Sultan wanted to test his friend's intelligence. "Do you see that man walking ahead of us? Can you tell me what his profession is?"

Husain watched the man's movements and mannerisms for a while. "He's a carpenter, my Sultan!"

The Sultan wondered how easily the answer came from Husain. "All right, can you tell me his name?"

Husain again replied promptly. "He and I have the same name."

"Does that mean that you know him already?" queried the Sultan. "Have you met him before?"

"No, not at all," said Husain. "I've never seen him before."

"Then, how are you able to tell me his name and his profession so correctly?" asked the Sultan, curiously.

"Oh, that? Remember you called me by name?" said Husain. "I saw him turn round as if he heard someone calling for him! Did you notice what he was observing as he walked? No? He was looking at the tall trees. He was not interested in leaves, or flowers, or bushes. Probably he was thinking, what use the trees could be put to, or how many planks the timber



would yield. That's how I could guess that he is a carpenter."

"You're really intelligent, Husain," remarked the Sultan. "Your observation is quick. Can you tell me what food he would have eaten last?" posed the Sultan.

Husain observed the wayfarer for sometime and said, "I think he ate something sweet. I've ■ feeling it was honey."

"All right, we shall find out how far you're correct, Husain," said the Sultan. "Let's go and ask him."

The two hurried to the man. The Sultan asked him: "What's your name?"

"Husain."

"What's your profession?"

"I'm a carpenter."

"What did you ■ ■ while ago?"

"Pure honey."

The Sultan introduced himself to the man. "I'm very happy," he said. "Please accept this as my gift." He took off a necklace and gave it to him. The man was overjoyed. He praised the Sultan and went his way.

The Sultan turned to Husain once again. "Your observation is excellent. Tell me, Husain, how did you know that he had eaten honey?"

"I saw him smacking his lips," replied Husain, "and he was waving off fleas from his palm. So, I surmised that he would have eaten something sweet, and it could be honey."

"Your observation is great, Husain!" said the Sultan. "You're able to make correct conclusions. Would you join my court as a minister?"

Of course, Husain agreed to serve the Sultan.

- Kindness is not to be respected of.
- Nothing leads to good which is not natural.
- Do not praise an unworthy man for the sake of ■ wealth.

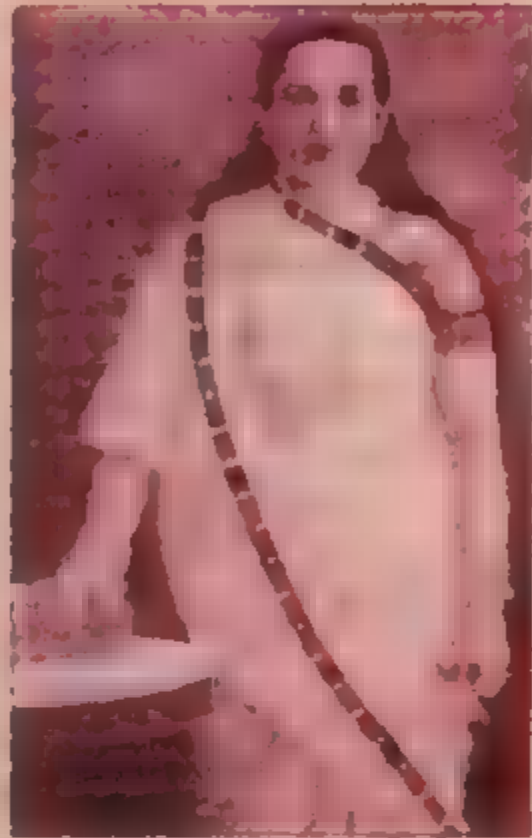
NEWS FLASH

They ■■■■ for Indian children

In Germany, a group of people have formed an organisation called ICUS, which is an abbreviation for 'a bright future for children in India', in German language. It is headed by a banker, Gerhard, and has the Labour Minister, Dr. Norbert Blume, as Patron. ICUS has nearly 160 members, including some Indians who are settled down in Germany. These kind-hearted people have been regularly contributing money on their birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and other occasions for a fund from which amounts are diverted for helping children with their education, providing wheelchairs, artificial limbs, and other aids for the handicapped, and constructing school buildings, hospitals, libraries, parks, and recreation centres for children. Members of ICUS often visit India to find out how their donations are being utilised. Kindness does know no frontiers.

Big draw for Indian paintings

A sale organised by the famous auctioneers, Christies, in London, has once again showed how art lovers the world over ■■■■ eager to acquire paintings from India. A painting by Raja Ravi Varma of a woman in a sari was sold for Rs. 20,30,000, more than double the



catalogue price. A painting by N.S. Bendre fetched as much as Rs 11,60,000. It appears there was a good demand for paintings by K.K. Hebbar, Ganesh Pyne, and Anjolie Ela Menon. Another well-known auctioneer in London, Sotheby, is planning a major sale of Indian paintings in New York in October. As many as 600 Indian paintings hit the auctioneers market in the past one year.

First woman to reach North Pole

Christine Janian, a 40-year old doctor in France, and her Russian guide, Sergei Ogorodnikov, set out on March 3 from the northernmost tip of Russia, and headed for the North Pole—on foot. They took a little over 60 days to reach

their destination. Trekking was not the only aim of Christine. En route she collected money to establish a centre to treat sick children.

Non-stop feats

Andhra Pradesh has the distinction of presenting to the world some artistes who have earned a name for their non-stop feats. Take for instance B. Ramakrishna Reddi, of Hyderabad. He did mimicry for 50 hours. K. Gopalakrishna, also of Hyderabad, played on the violin for 30 hours. V. Ravindra

Kumar, of Guntur, whistled Carnatic songs for 45 hours 20 minutes. Of course, similar feats have been achieved by non-Andhrites also. Like G. Sreedhar, of Chennai (Madras). He played the flute for 24 hours. Chandan Chatterjee of Aligarh played on the *tabla* for 36 hours. How do they achieve this? It could be their stamina, concentration, or determination. If you are able to sit at your study table for two or three hours at one stretch, that could be ■ real achievement. Try!



Dress for diagnosis

If you suffer from muscular pain, or if your bones have a crack or a fracture, you have only to put on a dress—called 'Dataware'. Within seconds, you can yourself diagnose the nature of your ailment or injury on the screen. An official with TCAS Effects of England, Franklin, is credited with the invention of Dataware, which is a kind of electronic dress. It has nearly 200 sensors, which record their "findings" on the computer screen. Dataware is being widely used for diagnosing ailments of athletes and other sports people.

The grapes could be sour



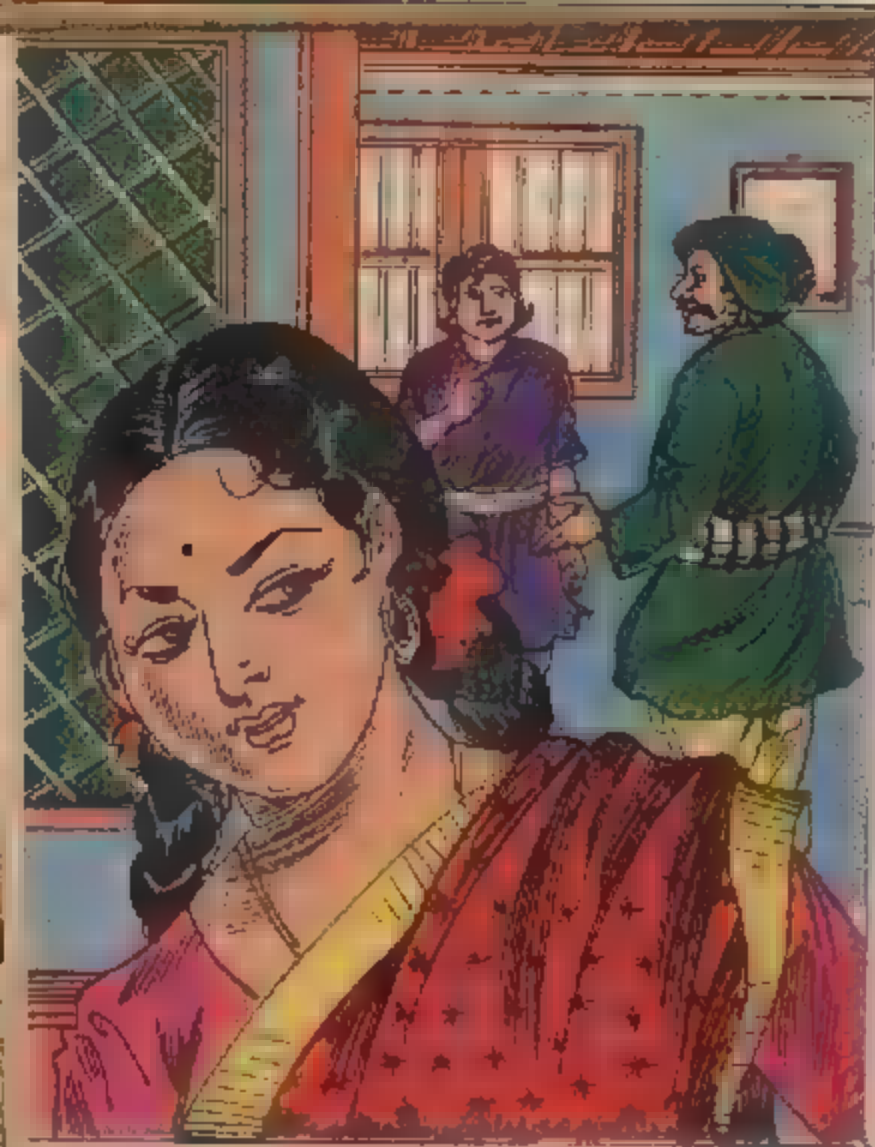
Giridhar was a young man of Ganganagar. He was born in a poor family of farmers. He was lazy. He could have very well helped his father on the farm. He had enough physical strength and was capable, too. But he wasted his time wandering here and there and refusing to go anywhere near the farm. A lazy youth like him, how could he wish to marry the princess of the land? But he nourished and cherished such an ambition. His father could not tolerate his laziness any longer. He drove him out.

But that did not upset Giridhar. He proceeded to the capital where his uncle was living, after retirement from the king's army. His daughter Ganga was the princess's companion.

When Uncle saw Giridhar coming,

he was happy. He received him with great affection. While talking to him, he took a good look at his nephew. He was of good physique, also handsome. The youth could very well join the army. "Giridhar, you're strong, clever, and capable. Shall I suggest something? You marry my daughter. I shall get you a job in the army, and you both can lead a happy life."

Giridhar was frank. "Uncle, I'm not eager to join the army. Instead, you get me a job in the palace. After I start working there, I shall think of marriage, but not now." By hook or by crook, he must get into the palace. He did not disclose that he had no wish to marry Ganga. That would have annoyed him. Once inside the palace, he could work his way to the princess's heart. That was his real



interest.

In fact, he sought Ganga's help to get him a job anywhere near the women's apartments in the palace. Between Ganga and her father, they managed such a job for Giridhar—ringing the bell to denote the hour of the day and night. He did not have to move out from his place. He did his work very punctually. One day passed; another day, and then a third day. But not once could he see the princess. He waited patiently. The princess never came along where he was sitting, below the huge bell. Some more days went by, and still there was no sign of the princess. He was thoroughly disappointed.

He felt shy of making any queries

with his cousin, Ganga. One day, he took courage and very casually asked the palace gardener, "Where's the princess's apartment? How can one see her? I would like to meet her once!"

The gardener laughed. "You wish to meet the princess, did you say? It's just impossible. I've never seen her myself, though I've been working here for many years. Probably we can see her only at the time of her wedding—that too from a distance. Till then, not a chance, my good friend!"

Giridhar thought that the ground he was standing on was sinking! Was there no way to meet the princess? Or at least see her? He spent all his leisure hours in contemplating different strategies. At last he thought up a plan. He had seen one of the maids pass his way with a basket of flowers every day. He struck up friendship with her. Yes, the flowers were meant for the princess. He wrote a letter to the princess expressing his desire to marry her. And he managed to tuck the letter inside the flower basket without the knowledge of the maid.

While he impatiently waited for a response from the princess or at least a signal from her, he got scared. Suppose the princess became angry with him? Sure as anything, he would lose his job; he might even be punished for his audacity. During the day he was restless; night came, and he could not get a wink of sleep. He forgot to ring the bell at one o'clock.

At two o'clock, he rang the bell thrice!

The king heard the bell and thought that something was wrong. He sat up in his bed and asked his chief attendant what the time was. He said it was then two o'clock. "But I heard the bell ringing three times!" the king insisted. "You go and bring that bell-ringer!" he ordered.

The attendant searched out Giridhar and took him to the king. He knew that the king was angry. But why? He never imagined that he had made a mistake while ringing the bell. All along he thought that his letter to the princess must have found its way to the king. If that was so, he was sure he would be punished. Death? A life in prison?

He was gasping for breath when he stood before the king, who looked at him from head to foot. He then shouted at him: "Did you ring the bell three times at two o'clock?"

Giridhar found himself dumbstruck. He tried to recall what he was doing during the previous two or three hours. He remembered he had struck the midnight hour. After that, what happened? He could not utter a word in reply.

The king mellowed down. "How long have you been doing the work of bell-ringer?"

"I've been at this job for the last two months!" Giridhar managed to blurt out.

The king took another good look at



the young ■■■■■ "Who gave you this job? You look strong. Bell-ringing is not a fit job for you. You should become a soldier instead, and serve the kingdom. You should be holding a sword, and not the rope of a bell! I'm going to ask my commander to take you into the army and send you to the border to defend the country. That'll be the most suitable job for you! You may go now!"

Giridhar heaved ■■■■■ great sigh of relief. He escaped punishment—for the time being. But had he really saved himself from punishment elsewhere? He went back to his post, still trembling. He could not hold the rope of the bell steady. Somehow, he remained alert till morning, when Ganga came his way. She appeared annoyed with him.

He thought she had a grouse against him for professing his love for the princess. "Bhaiyya, why did you send me a letter? You could have told me personally! The very day you came home, I knew what was in your mind. If you had told me then and there, our marriage would have taken place by now. Thank god, the letter reached me safe. Suppose it had gone into the hands of, say, the princess? She would have shown it to her father! You have no idea of the king's temper! He would have beheaded you on the spot!"

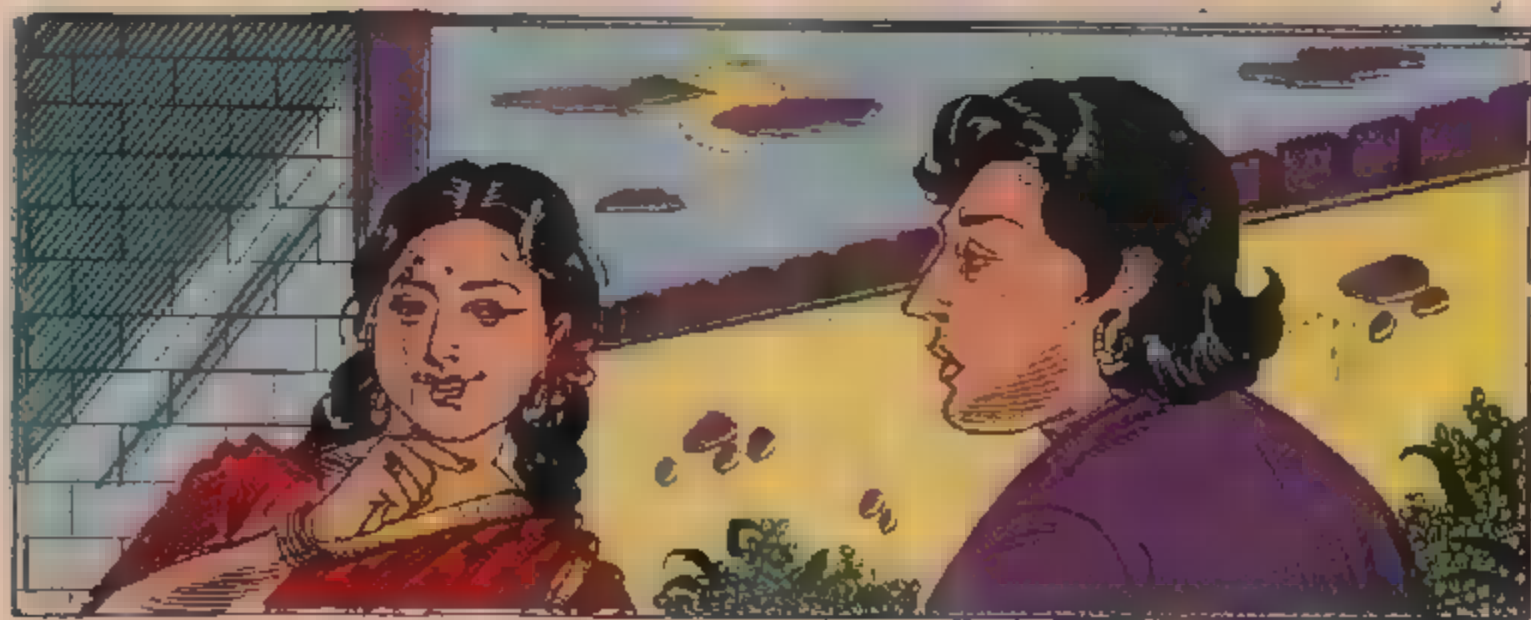
Giridhar could not believe his ears. What was he hearing? He could not say anything for sometime.

"There's no doubt about it. You deliberately avoided mentioning for whom the letter was meant. Whoever received it would not know to whom it had been sent. But you wanted to make sure that it reached my hands, didn't you? You knew that it is I who prepare the garland for the princess, and you managed to smuggle your letter among

the flowers! Very clever, I should say. Anyway, you've been saved from a grave tragedy. Thank god!"

Giridhar listened to every word of Ganga. Suddenly he had a change of heart. He thought, "True, if the letter had reached the princess, I would have lost my head! I did a wise thing by not mentioning to whom I was writing that letter! Though I did not do it deliberately, it had its plus points. And I must thank my lucky stars that my letter reached Ganga's hands. And she kept it confidential and did not tell anybody else about it. It's only fair that I gave her the credit and married her. That'll be proper, too. My fancy for the princess would have ended like the story of the fox and the sour grapes! Let me forget the princess for ever."

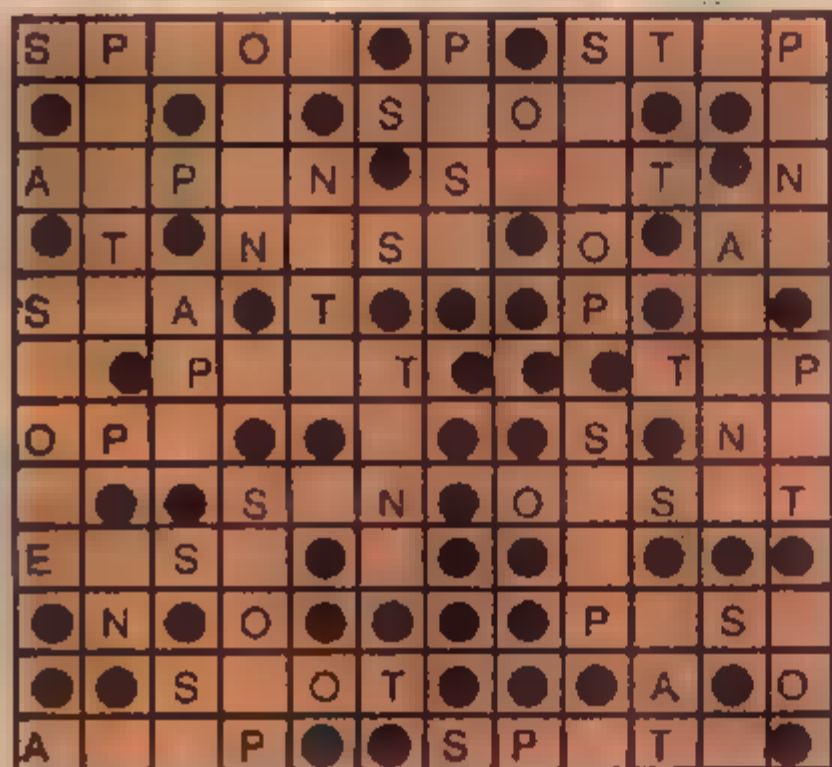
Soon, the marriage of Ganga and Giridhar took place. The princess graced the occasion, and Ganga introduced him to her. He realised that Ganga was more beautiful than the princess. Ere long, he got a job in the army.



A AMERICAN PUZZLE

P. Ramu

Find 37 words from the single word
'TEA SPOON'



Clues

2 letter words - 1

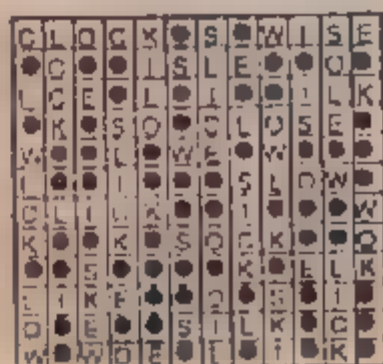
3 letter words - 7

4 letter words - 15

5 letter words - 9

Total words 37

Last month solution



e ROSS WORD

P. Ramu

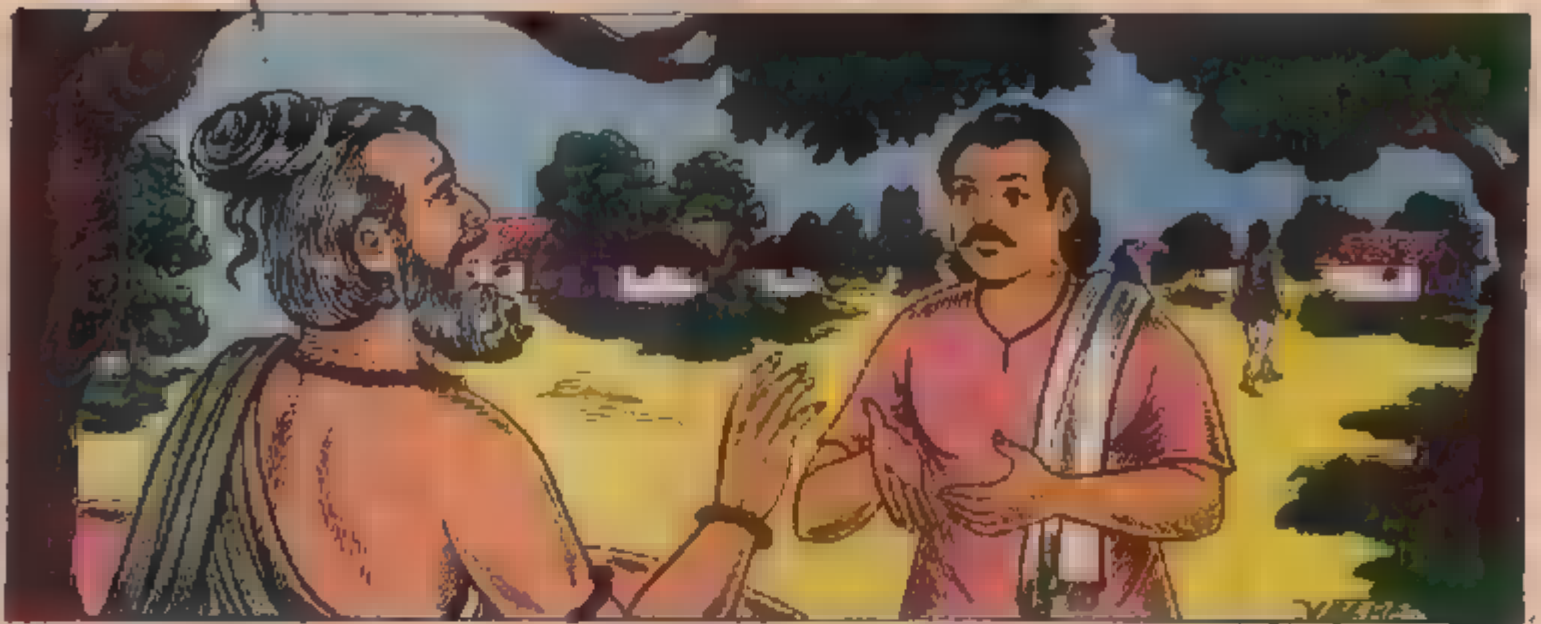


10



Using the picture clues make connecting words

Greed cannot last



Kumarappa owned a plot measuring three acres. He put it to good use and the income it yielded was enough for him to lead a comfortable life. But he was not quite satisfied with that. He wanted to live like the rich people of the locality. How could he become rich, and quickly, too? That was his.

He racked his brain for a method, a short cut, to become a wealthy person. He wanted people to point at him and say that he was the richest man of Kuntapur.

One day, a *sanyasi* visited Kuntapur. He was Swami Parmanand. Kumarappa called on him and after paying his obeisance to him, he queried: "O revered one! This world has crores and crores of people. Why should some of them be poor, and

others rich?"

"It's their fate!" explained Parmanand. "It's the result of their actions in the previous birth. When circumstances become favourable, people become rich. Circumstances can also make rich people to become poor."

"I wish to become a rich person, swami!" Kumarappa revealed his ambition. "Would you please suggest a method?"

"You can start an industry," said Parmanand. "Then you must take interest in some art and show some talent in that art; you can also become a rich man's partner and work along with him and acquire some of his experience and skill."

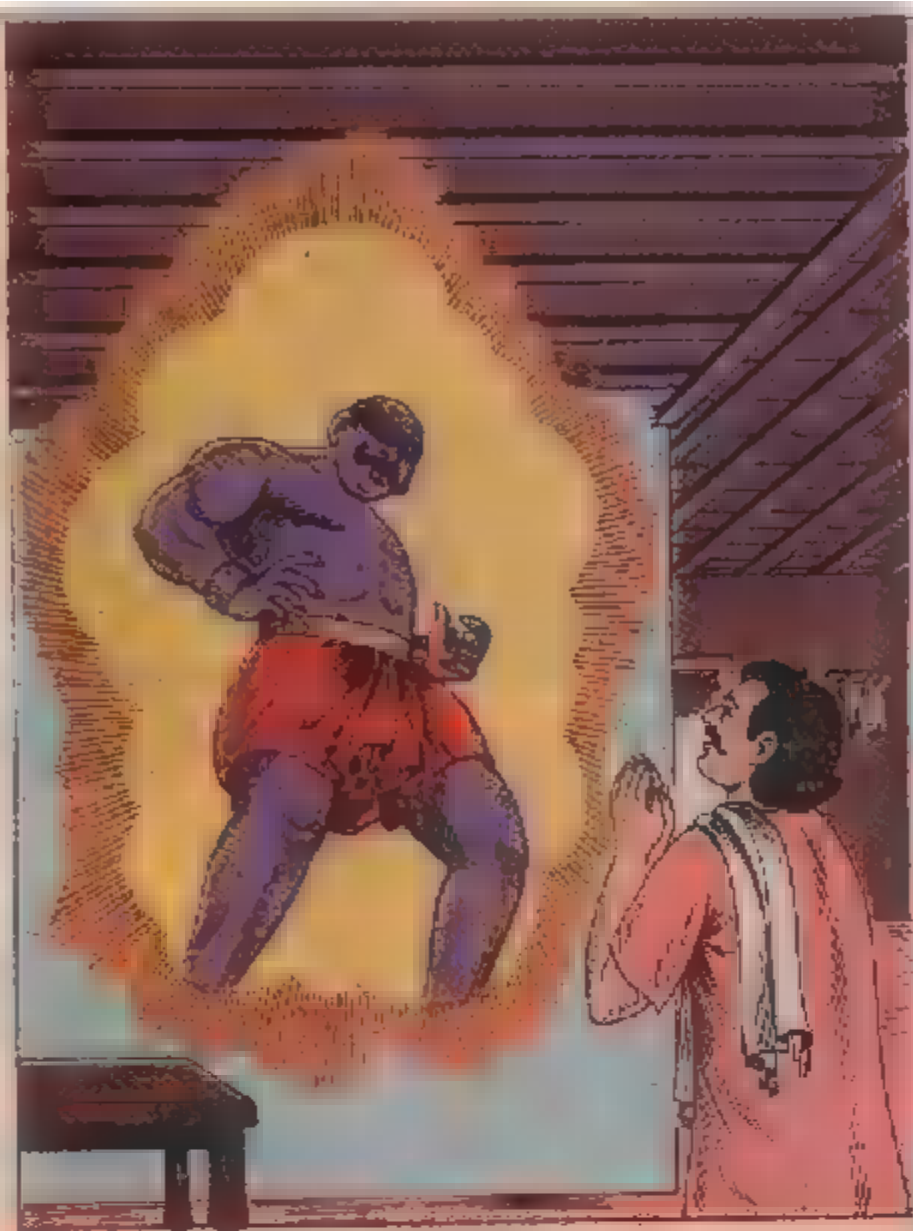
"Swami! I can't take up any of these three methods," confessed

Kumarappa. "I don't have enough money to start an industry, I don't know any art, and I don't wish to work along with any rich person."

"Kumarappa, what are you lacking in?" asked the swami. "You've everything. You make enough money to enjoy a comfortable life. You don't have any wants. You get enough food; you're in a way fortunate, more fortunate than many others. If you desire for more, that'll be greed. You should be satisfied with what you have. Otherwise you'll land yourself in trouble!" Parmanand warned him.

All this advice was not acceptable to Kumarappa. He could not appreciate the swami's suggestions. "It's not like that, swami!" he argued. "It's only natural that everybody wants to become rich. I'm not an exception. What's wrong in my wishing for more wealth?"

"I'm afraid, you don't understand whatever I say," said Parmanand very calmly. "Sincere effort, honesty, capability, and qualities like that will help you increase your wealth. That alone is true earnings. All other acquisitions will fade away. If you don't believe in any of these things, I shall teach you a *mantra*. If you chant that mantra, Chor Bhagavan will appear before you. You can then tell him what you wish for. He'll go and rob the rich and place the stolen wealth before you. He'll appear only once. Whatever he brings cannot be en-



joyed for more than a month; in fact, you won't be able to spend all that within a month. I may also warn you—you should not try your luck to acquire wealth. That'll show you off as greedy. Such wealth will not last long, mind you!"

"Please teach me that mantra, swami!" said Kumarappa. So Parmanand whispered a mantra into his ears three times. "You must get up before dawn, take a bath, and then chant the mantra three times. The god will appear before you," the swami instructed him.

Kumarappa went home. That night, he merely lay down, and did not sleep. He was waiting for dawn. Much before dawn, he got up, took



his bath, and then began chanting the mantra. Just as the swami had told him, a huge figure appeared before him. "I am the god of thieves. Yes, what do you wish for?"

"Prabhu! I wish to have ten thousand gold coins!" said Kumarappa in one breath.

"That's all?" the figure remarked. "Where do you want it? Right here in this room in a heap, or in that wooden box in your bedroom?"

"In that wooden box, lord!" replied Kumarappa.

"Then you keep the lid open, and be away till the first rays of the sun comes into the room," said the figure in front of him before disappearing.

Kumarappa went to his bedroom,

kept the box open, and went away from the room. He went out and began walking up and down in front of his house.

The moment he saw sunlight, he went in. Lo! and behold, the box was now closed. Excitedly, he opened the lid, and saw the gold coins. He could not believe his eyes. He closed the box and went about his chores. His family was surprised to find him smiling all the while. Why was he overjoyed, and about what? they wondered. But they did not dare ask him, nor did he take them into confidence, not even his wife.

Kumarappa did not start making use of the gold coins immediately. Every now and then he would merely open the lid and take a peep into the box and remain content, with seeing the coins. He would quickly close the lid and go away from the room. He made it a ritual to look inside the box every morning after his bath. He had decided to spend it only after a month.

Days passed, and then weeks, and then a full month. When he opened the box the next day, he once again could not believe his eyes. The box was empty! Where had the gold coins disappeared? "Who has taken the gold coins from the box?" he shouted. "Where have the coins disappeared?" he asked, tearing at his hair, like a mad man.

"Gold goes? We never saw any gold coins in this house!" said his

wife. "Are you in your senses?"

None of his children, too, had seen any gold coin around. "Where did you keep them, father? You never told us!" they appeared offended.

Kumarappa felt ashamed to tell them of his meeting with Swami Parmanand and the mantra he was taught and his encounter with the god of thieves. He was sure that they would only laugh at him. He ran out of the house and went in search of the swami where he had met him a month ago. He was told that the sanyasi had left the place a week earlier. He went back home. On the way, he met his friend Govindappa. "What a coincidence!" he said. "I was on my way to your residence."

"You wanted to see me? Why?" asked Kumarappa. Would he have

some knowledge about the gold coins? he wondered.

"I was coming to remind you about our agreement," said Govindappa. "Don't you remember we had decided that my daughter would marry your eldest boy? You had asked for a dowry of ten thousand coins. At that time I could not spare that much money. I now have the money, and so let's not delay in performing the marriage."

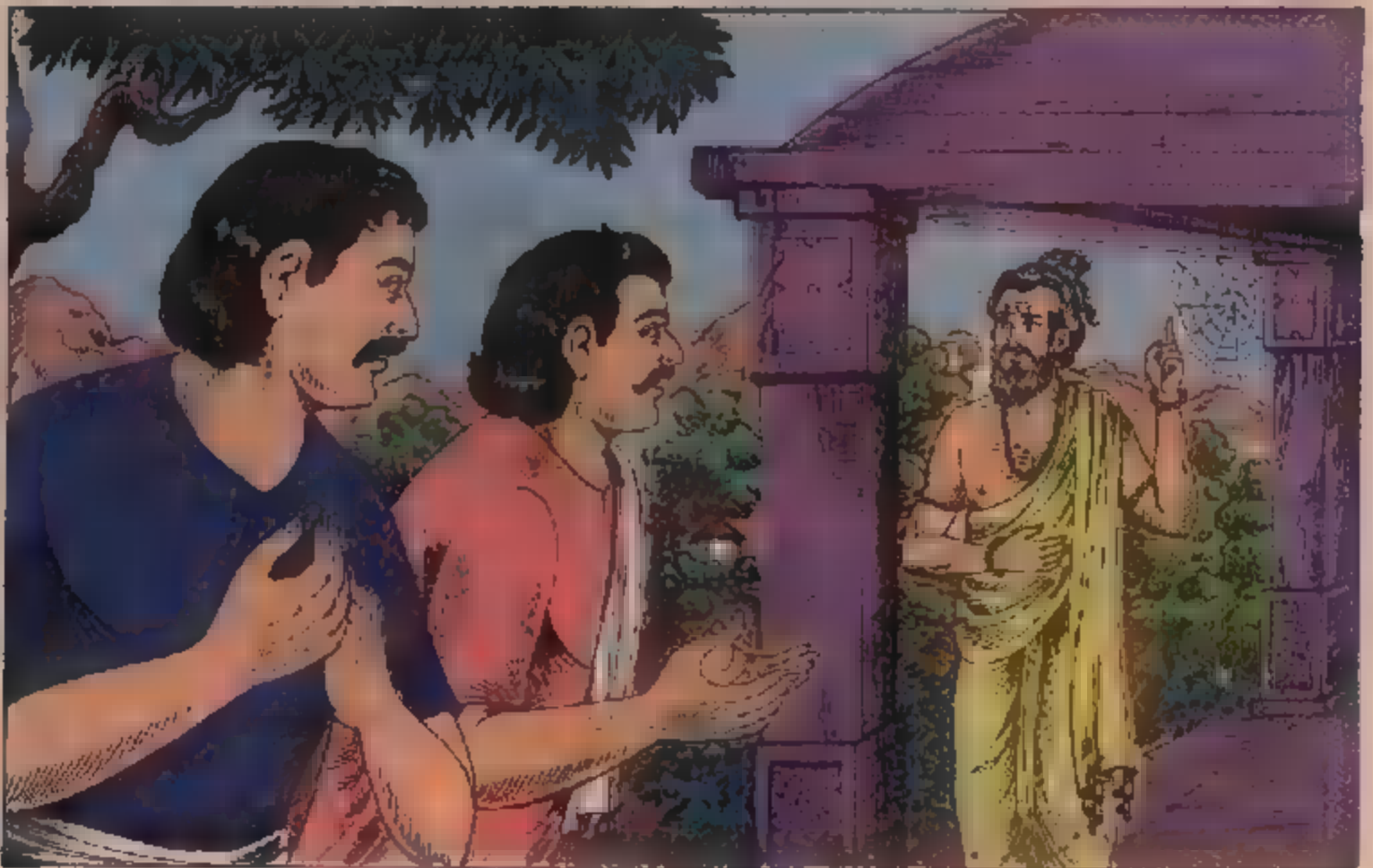
"But, then, how did you manage to get that much money?" asked Kumarappa.

"Oh! I received the blessings of a yogi," said Govindappa.

"Yogi? Which yogi?" asked Kumarappa. Would he get any clue?

"Swami Parmanand," said Govindappa.

"Parmanand? Where is he? I want



to meet him," said Kumarappa eagerly.

Govindappa led him to where Parmanand was staying. The moment he was ushered into his presence, Kumarappa wailed: "Swami! Everything has vanished!" He then fell at his feet.

"I had already told you, Kumarappa," said Parmanand, "that you should make use of it within a month, and that you would also not be able to spend it within that period. And that it would remain with you only for a month. You were greedy, and merely kept the wealth without making use of it. Chor Bhagavan must have been angry with you and given that money to someone who would have made a similar request. If you had asked for an amount that you actually needed, he would have given it to you and wouldn't have taken it back from you because you would have spent it."

Kumarappa then hurried to Govindappa's house, where he found him crestfallen. He too was staring at an empty wooden box. "The money I wanted to give you as dowry has vanished!" he moaned.

Kumarappa realised what would have happened to his friend. He told him about his own missing gold coins. "We both were greedy, Govindappa!" he said, taking his friend's hands into his. "The swami was correct. You did not have enough money to give me as dowry. So, you craved for wealth to satisfy my greed. And we annoyed the god, and naturally he took away whatever he gave us. No, I wouldn't insist on dowry. I don't need that kind of money which will not really belong to me. Let's perform the wedding without asking for or giving dowry."

Govindappa was overjoyed. He too decided that he would be happy and satisfied with whatever he had.



SPORTS SNIPPETS

Indians reach new heights

■ The next best thing to breaking ■ world record is to equal one. And that was what 21-year-old Jaspal Rana of Delhi achieved on June ■ at the IV National Games in Bangalore. This ace



shooter scored a total of 590 points in central fire pistol. In 1989, a Russian had totalled that many points to create ■ world record in the event.

● Birthday gifts have been many in Madras-born, Bangalore-based tennis player Mahesh Bhupathi's life. On his 23rd birthday on June 7, he decided to give himself a gift. And what a gift it was! A Grand Slam title in the French Open at Roland Garros. Pairing with Rika Hiraki of Japan, he won the mixed doubles final. It was the first Grand

Slam title for both India and Japan. The 16th seeded pair defeated the top seeded Lisa Raymond and Patrick Galbraith of U.S.A. 6-4, 6-1. It



appears Mahesh was ■ first reluctant to play mixed doubles. Rika had approached India's Olympic (Atlanta) medallist Leander Paes, who excused himself and introduced his men's doubles partner Mahesh Bhupathi to her. Mahesh was playing mixed doubles for the first time. He entered

the court with trepidation. But by the time the pair won the second round, Mahesh had become more confident. His father, C. Gopalkrishna Bhupathi, was once a leading tennis player. His mother, Meera, hails from Kerala.

■ It must be unique for ■ player to hold both the 'Indian Cricketer of the Year' title and the 'International Cricketer of the Year' title. This distinction has gone to India's medium pace bowler Venkatesh Prasad. In the CEAT-rating for the international title, Prasad with 92 points upstaged Pakistan's Wasim Akram (87 points). Anil Kumble got 85, Sachin Tendulkar 79, and M o h a m m e d Azharuddin 66 points. Prasad's achievements included 55 wickets in 15 Tests with five hauls of five wickets each



and a 10-wicket haul in a match against South Africa. The award, which goes with a Rs. 5 lakh cash prize, was announced on June 14. Two days earlier, on June 12, he won the Sun-Grace Mafatlal Indian Cricketer of the Year award, which carries Rs. 1 lakh with it. Prasad scored 88 points against Tendulkar's ■ and Kumble's 84 points.

● There was a lone woman participant in the equestrian events in the IV National Games in Bangalore. That was 24-year-old Anisha Sodhi, whose father Roshan Sodhi and mother Billy Sodhi were both successful riders. Anisha chose the more difficult show jumping than the easier dressage. "I've been on a horse ever since I can remember," she shot back at a correspondent when asked

why she chose the more demanding event. "I've taken to show jumping because it is more exciting."

■ The IV National Games in Bangalore witnessed 24 new National records and as many ■ 87 new Games records. Ten new records were made in swimming, 9 in athletics, and five in weightlifting.

Unseeded, now on top

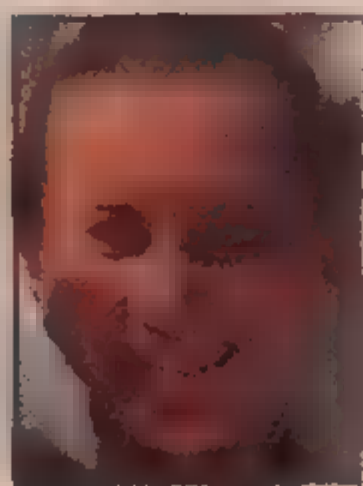
Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil ■ seeded 66th among men, while Iva Majoli ■ placed ninth among 16 women seeded players for the French Open Tennis, but they both took the singles titles early in June. Their success was characterised

■ fantasy turning fact, fit for believe-it-or-not tales.

Kuerten ■ considered the most unlikely winner as he was meeting Sergi Bruguera of Spain in the final. The Spaniard had won

the French title twice, in 1993 and 1994. But Kuerten emerged from near obscurity to crush Bruguera in a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 crowning victory, and to become the first unseeded winner in the French Open since Mats Wilander in 1982. He is now seeded No. 15.

Four years ago, Iva Majoli of Croatia was described as the Most Impressive Newcomer. Subsequently she reached the quarter-finals in the Australian Open



and French Open. Now 19 years old, she became the first Croatian to win a Grand Slam singles title, beating No. One favourite Martina Hingis (16) of Switzerland in straight sets 6-4, 6-2. In the second set, when the score stood at 5-2, Hingis had to be attended to for cramps on her thighs, but by then Majoli's victory was already in sight.

Also hailing from Croatia like Majoli, Mirjana Lucic, who has just turned 15 and who is the youngest winner of a WTA (World Tennis Association) tournament at the first attempt early in May, could not play in the French Open, as the Rules prevent players under 16 from participating in Grand Slam tournaments.

For your scrap book

■ It was an elephant calf which "kicked off" the Youth Football tournament for under-20s at Sha Alam in Malaysia ■ June 16.

■ Greg Mathews, that legendary cricketer of Australia, took the barber's razor and shaved off England selector Graham Gooch's moustache in London on the eve of the current series of Ashes. Gooch "reciprocated" when his turn came. On the field, England and Australia are traditional rivals. But they remain friends, Ashes or no Ashes.

■ Donovan Bailey is the fastest man today. In the 150 metres sprint held in Toronto on June 2, the Canadian beat Michael Johnson of the U.S.A. clocking 14.99 seconds. Half-way, Johnson was 2 metres behind Bailey. In the next couple of seconds Johnson suffered a muscle pull and he cried off at the 100m point.



REFORMATION



Kulwant Rai was one of the wealthiest men of the locality. One night, there was an attempt at burglary in his huge house. The thief, Balwan, was caught red-handed and handed over to the police. Subsequently, he was sent to jail for two years.

The day he was being released, the jailor called him and said: "You must have by now realised that burglary is a serious crime. Learn a lesson, and never attempt robbery, burglary, or even petty thefts. Take up a job and earn a decent living."

"Sir," said Balwan, without batting an eyelid, "I know it's a crime and one can get punished. I know it and everybody else knows it. But I can't help thieving. That's our family

tradition. My father was a thief; my grandfather was a burglar. Why, my great grandfather was a robber himself. So, if I were to say that it is an offence, a crime, and all that, or if I desist from our tradition, I'll only be offending my family, my ancestors."

The jailor realised that there was no point in trying to reform Balwan. "Oh, is that so? Then, what do you propose to do tomorrow?"

"First thing, I'm going to clean my ears," said Balwan.

"What! What did you say? Clean your ears? Why?" the jailor could not believe his ears. "Are you mocking at me?" Evidently he was angry with Balwan.

"No, sir, I am not joking," said Balwan in all seriousness. "I still

remember that day when I entered Kulwant Rai saheb's house. Some days earlier, I had gone to that house for some work, when I took the opportunity to study the place and find out where exactly he had kept his iron safe. I also noticed a convenient window in the room, through which I could insert an iron rod with a hook and draw the safe to the window, open it, and take out its contents. I made everything foolproof and waited till midnight. I went there, moved up to the window, and inserted the iron rod. The hook hit the iron safe with a loud noise. Saheb woke up and made a hue and cry which brought the neighbours to his house and I was caught."

"All right, but what has that got to do with thieving and ears?" queried the jailor impatiently. "What's the connection?"

"Sir, I was about to tell you that!" said Balwan. "When the hook hit the

safe, it actually hit the side and not the handle. There was a loud noise which saheb heard, but not I. That's why I said I must have my ears cleaned."

"You're a fool, Balwan!" commented the jailor. "I should say the greatest among fools! You see, when you threw the iron rod inside, you did not see the handle of the safe. That's why the rod went and hit the side. If you had properly seen the handle, the rod would not have made any noise. In other words, your eyesight is falling!"

"That means, I can't see properly and I can't also hear properly!" rued Balwan. "Sir, please put in a word to Kulwant Rai saheb to give me a job. I shall lead a quiet, honest life!"

The jailor was happy. He called on Kulwant Rai, took him into confidence, and requested him to give some employment to Balwan in his establishment.





Who was the first lady Governor in Independent India?

- Manoswini Devi, Athamallek, Orissa

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was appointed Governor of Uttar Pradesh—the largest State in the country—in 1947. The great poetess, in her own inimitable way, commented: "I feel like a wild bird being caged."

A child born to an Indian mother on board an aeroplane while it flies over the Mediterranean—would it be an Indian citizen or considered a 'foreigner'?

- Sanjay Tiwari, Tribeni, W. Bengal

A child born to an Indian mother and an Indian father (both holding Indian passports) is an Indian until he or she (on attaining maturity) or any of the parents, on his or her behalf, applies for the citizenship of another country.

What is meant by 'hard currency' and 'soft currency'?

- Mrutyunjaya Nalla, Laxmipur

Any currency which is unlikely to fluctuate greatly in value is *hard currency*; whereas a currency which is not supported by gold reserves and is, therefore, likely to depreciate in value is *soft currency*. Indian rupee is soft currency and its value has depreciated over the years. For example, the present rupee equivalent of a U.S. dollar is nearly Rs.35.80; a few months ago, the "exchange rate" was Rs.35.75; some years ago, one could "buy" a dollar for Rs.20! The dollar does not depreciate in value. It is hard currency.

FROM OUR READERS

Chandamama leads me towards better English. It is really interesting.

M. Naveed Ahmed, Mahbub Nagar

Your magazine is readable for children and elders, as it is filled with interesting facts and stories. I hope you include more stories of kings and demons.

Sarat Chandra, Sainikpuri



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



TAJY PRASAD



K. SUBRAHMANYAM

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on an ordinary post card and mail it to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, Vadapalani, Madras - 600 026, to reach us by the 25th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

The Prize for May 1997 goes to :-

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The winning entry : "In tender hands"

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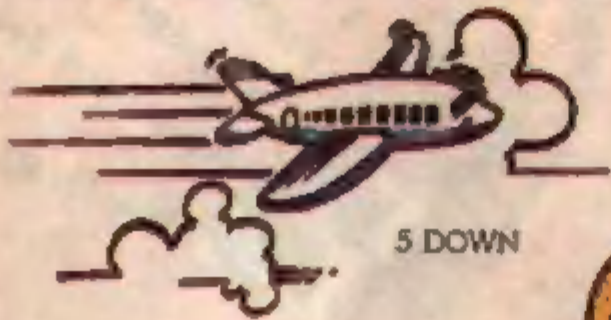
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Eggcetera

Brain Scramblers for Kids


Hey, kids. What's yellow and white and good to eat?
Solve the crossword puzzle and you'll find the magic word in the coloured squares.



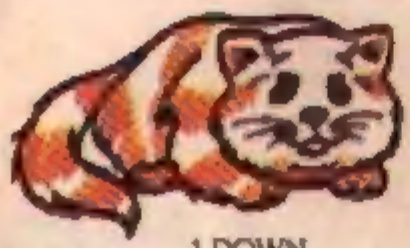
5 DOWN




1 DOWN




4 DOWN




1 DOWN



1 ACROSS



3 ACROSS



6 ACROSS

		1.			4.
2.					
3.					
			5.		
6.					

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